7000 SILK WORKERS STRIKE FOR BREAD AND UNITY

by JOHN J. BALLAM
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70,000 SILK WORKERS STRIKE

for

BREAD AND UNITY

By JOHN J. BALLAM

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CHAPTER I

Ballyboo

70,000 SILK WORKERS STRIKE

WORKERS will not soon forget the Spring and Summer of 1933. Never before had they been the object of so much solicitude. It was to be the "New Deal." Millions of men and women were unemployed and hungry through no fault of their own; starving in the midst of plenty. This was to be corrected. The unemployed were to be re-employed. The "New Deal" was going to raise wages, reduce hours and guarantee to all workers the right to organize.

After three years of wage-slashing and part-time work, the employed workers were little better off. They were the victims of ruthless speed-

up and exploitation. They were unorganized and helpless.

Soon after taking office, Roosevelt took the United States off the gold standard and made it clear that his objective was to raise commodity prices and reduce the value of the dollar. The abandonment of the gold standard and the anticipation of inflated prices caused speculators to convert the depreciated dollars into goods and securities and the manufacturers to produce goods at the prevailing low costs, expecting later to make huge profits through their sale at high prices.

In the textile industry the rise in production was especially sharp. With prices of raw material rising, and with further increases expected, manufacturers bought up large quantities of raw material which they hastily converted and piled up in the warehouses or on the shelves of wholesale merchants.

* * * *

The National Industrial Recovery Act was passed by Congress on June 13, 1933 and is entitled, "An Act to encourage national industrial recovery, to foster fair competition, to provide for the construction of certain useful public works . . . and for other purposes."

This was ushered in with a blare of trumpets and red fire reminiscent of the days of the World War. Newspapers opened the campaign with inspired articles, editorials, and cartoons. The radio was enlisted and speeches about the New Deal and the N.R.A. poured into every

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home. Cabinet members, congressmen, senators, governors, mayors, comedians, artists, industrial magnates, priests, rabbis, professors, technicians, teachers, society dames, "socialists," the President, and the President's wife, all and sundry, sang the praises of the beautiful Blue Eagle. William Green, President of the American Federation of Labor, added his voice to the general clamor. He said:—

"This proposed legislation marks a very definite step forward in industrial stabilization, rationalization and economic planning. The bill is appropriately termed an industrial recovery measure. It is in the judgment of labor the most outstanding, advanced and forward-looking legislation designed to promote economic recovery that has thus far been proposed. In the opinion of labor it will, when applied, prove to be a real, practical, constructive remedy for unemployment."

Speakers and brass bands on the street corners and public squares told about the misery of the workers and of how the Blue Eagle would bring back prosperity. N.R.A. agents visited us in our homes to tell us what a wonderful place our country was to become under the N.R.A. Big parades were organized to demonstrate (and to advertise the bosses' wares) for the Blue Eagle. A cloud of Blue Eagles descended upon the cities and the countryside. They screamed at one from every factory, shop and mill; from every store show-window, from bread wrappers, from canned goods, and other articles of daily consumption—"We Do Our Part."

* * * * *

The government set up the necessary machinery to carry out the N.R.A. General Hugh Johnson was appointed administrator with an advisory board; there are various industrial boards, code authorities, the National Labor Board, etc. These boards conduct hearings on the basis of proposals or "codes" submitted by the bosses. As General Johnson explained:—

"It is trade or industrial associations or groups, and not combinations of trade with labor groups, which are to submit codes or agreements."

The first hearing on a code under the N.R.A. was that of the cotton textile industry.

The National Textile Workers Union drew up its own, a workers', code, and was the only organization to send a delegation of textile workers to attend the hearing in Washington on June 29th, 1933. They

submitted their code, argued for it, but received scant consideration. The textile bosses' code was adopted with the approval of President Thomas F. McMahon and other officials of the United Textile Workers of America. President Roosevelt signed this code and it became effective on July 17, 1933.

Meanwhile the cost of living was going up. The silk weavers were earning \$15 and less a week in money wages. But their real wages were, of course, determined by what this money would buy. And retail prices had shot up—some articles of daily consumption rising from 50 per cent to 100 per cent. This was equivalent to a wage-cut for silk workers, in fact for all workers.

All the ballyhoo and all the Blue Eagles and all the promises could not change the fact that real wages were dropping, that the silk workers were getting less for their labor than ever before in the history of the industry.

The dye-house workers were getting 45c an hour for hard, unhealthful work. And they were working on "split shifts." Although they hung around the dye-house for eight or nine hours each day, they were given two, three or four hours work. Experienced dye workers in many cases got the munificent sum of \$12, for two weeks' pay.

Discontent and resentment were rife in every dye house and silk mill. These workers listened in amazement to the demagogic phrases of Roosevelt, who, on June 30, 1933, had promised "living wages" in the following words:

". . . and by living wages, I mean more than a bare subsistence level—I mean the wages of decent living."

CHAPTER II

The Storm Gathers

The year 1933 opened with partial struggles against starvation wages in many industries. The workers and farmers were striking throughout the country. By September, 1933, over 1,000,000 workers had been on strike. And in every section and in all branches of the textile industry, partial struggles took place. Nearly 250,000 textile workers had been on strike in mill after mill during the first eight months of 1933. This movement began in the South. Greenville and Columbia, S. C., Rossville, Ga., Anniston and Mobile, Ala., Burlington and High Point, N. C., Chattanooga, Tenn., Danville, Va., and dozens of other southern textile towns were involved.

These textile strikes spread to the North through Morristown, Pottstown, Lansdale, Lebanon, Chester, Pa., to New Castle, Del.; and from Paterson, Easton, Allentown, Scranton, Wilkes Barre to Binghamton, Port Jervis, White Plains, Buchanan, N. Y.; Norwich and Hartford, Conn., to Providence, Pawtucket, Woonsocket and Central Falls, R. I.; and from Northampton, Salem and Lowell, Mass., to Manchester, Denver and Hillsboro, N. H.

Hosiery, tapestry, cotton, woolen and worsted, silk and rayon, rope, braid and carpet workers were in these struggles. Most of the strikes were spontaneous. Some were led by the United Textile Workers and others by the National Textile Workers Union. Slight gains were achieved in almost every case, but little permanent organization resulted.

Of the 1,000,000 workers in the textile industry the overwhelming majority are unorganized. The United Textile Workers of America up to June, 1933, did not claim over 36,000 members in all branches of the industry. This is a typical A. F. of L. union organized at Washington, D. C., November 19, 1901. In its 32 years of existence it has had but two presidents—John Golden and Thomas F. McMahon.

The character of this A. F. of L. union may be seen at a glance by these excerpts from the preamble or "objects" of its Constitution and By-Laws:

"1. The objects of this organization are: First, to establish and maintain as far as possible a fair rate of wages upon as high a standard as possible, consistent with the true interest of trade. . . .

The U.T.W. is, in principle, opposed to strikes as a method of preventing wage-cuts and speed-up and for winning improved conditions and increased wages for textile workers. Its practice, over a period of thirty years, has been to oppose and prevent strikes, and, failing this, to end the strikes as speedily as possible, usually against the best interests of the strikers. Instead of strikes, the U.T.W. leadership sets up the policy of "arbitration," that is, as stated in its program above—"To persuade employers to arbitrate differences. . ." (My italics—J. B.)

The social outlook of the U.T.W. leaders is identical with that of the textile barons. They accept the wages system as permanent and profess the belief that the interests of the millionaire mill owner are identical with the interests of the hungry, sweated mill worker. In the language of the labor movement this point of view and the practices that grow out of it have come to be known as class collaboration.

How well these principles work out may be seen by the unorganized state of the industry, the increasing misery of the textile workers, and the failure of the United Textile Workers Union to make any headway in thirty-two years even with the occasional encouragement of the bosses and the support of government agencies.

This line of the U.T.W. bureaucrats has been challenged many times in the past. All the great, historic textile strikes in America were under the leadership of those who repudiated the splitting, strike-breaking, class-collaboration policy of the Goldens and the McMahons.

The great Lawrence woolen strikes were led by the I.W.W. in 1912; by an independent local union in 1919; by the Amalgamated Textile Workers of America in 1922; and twice by the National Textile Workers Union in 1931. In Paterson, the I.W.W. led the great 1913 silk strike. The Amalgamated led the successful 44-hour week strike in 1919. Non-U.T.W. unions led the strikes of 1924 and 1928. National Textile Union's leadership predominated in 1931.

The N.T.W.U. led the historic strikes in Passaic, N. J.; Gastonia, N. C.; New Bedford, Mass.; Pawtucket, Central Falls, R. I.; and many others.

In many of these strikes substantial gains were won for the workers, in spite of the fact that the U.T.W. leaders had tried to split the ranks of the fighting workers, to make common cause with the strikers' enemies and to defeat the strike.

CHAPTER III

The Silk Workers' Forces

There are over 200,000 silk and rayon workers in the United States producing broad silk (dress goods, linings, etc.); ribbon and hat-bands; fancy goods (Jacquard); spinning ("throwing") silk yarn; producing artificial silk fibre (rayon); hosiery (a separate brand of the textile industry); dyeing, printing, finishing (dye workers); etc.

Silk and rayon cloth is woven in 1,500 mills. The units of production are usually small. In Paterson, N. J., there are about 600 small shops employing 12,000 silk workers. In addition there are 20,000 dye workers engaged in the process of dyeing and finishing yarn or cloth. Some 17,000 of them work within a 15-mile radius of Paterson.

The bulk of the silk throwing (spinning) is done in 244 mills in 141 towns (located for the most part in the anthracite section of Pennsylvania), employing over 50,000 workers. These are mostly women and girls who operate over 5,000,000 spindles. (For further facts on the textile industry and its workers see Labor and Silk by Grace Hutchins and Labor and Textiles by Robert Dunn and Jack Hardy; also Textile Notes, issued monthly by Labor Research Association, 80 East 11th Street, New York City.)

With the development of artificial silk fibre (rayon, viscose, celanese, etc.) the industry expanded until silk and rayon dress goods have largely displaced other fabrics from the market for women's wear and other uses. Seventy-five per cent of the product of the silk looms today is either rayon or mixed fibres.

The silk industry spread from New York and New Jersey into Pennsylvania, New England and the South. Only about ten per cent of silk weaving is in the South, mainly in North Carolina.

On May 10, 1933, the Associated Silk Workers Union (U.T.W.) of Paterson, N. J., announced that a general strike would be called to take effect Monday, May 17, at 10 A.M. The silk weavers, who were then earning from \$9 to \$15 a week, demanded 4c a yard for 60 picks (about \$18 a week) and the 8-hour day. The Silk Manufacturers' Association of Paterson, as usual, declared that this strike would ruin the city.

The National Textile Workers Union immediately sent a letter ask-

ing the Executive Committee of the Associated to co-operate in making adequate preparation for the strike on the basis of a united front. This letter, as well as all proposals for unity of action both before and afterwards, were rejected by the Associated leaders. The following statement is characteristic of the united front policy of the National Textile Workers Union. It is here published in part as follows:

"Nearly a month ago the National Textile Workers Union addressed the various organizations of textile workers in Paterson for a united front to organize the fight against the present starvation conditions. . . . The Associated Silk Workers replied on April 26th, rejecting the united front proposal. . . .

"The Associated officials, in rejecting the united front proposal, admit that 'on numerous occasions we have received communications from your organization (N. T. W. U.) requesting united front action.' . . .

"The Associated, in its reply, states that 'a union is in itself the instrument of united action by the workers . . . in creating a dual organization . . . you destroyed the unity of the workers.' Certainly a union should be an instrument of united action. We stand for one union in each industry. But the fact is that the Associated has not even five per cent of the Paterson silk workers in its ranks. And that the National Textile Workers Union, together with the United Twisters Club, represent a force which cannot be ignored if the aim is united action of the workers. There are a number of organizations in existence and the needs of the workers demand that there shall be united front of the workers in the coming struggle against the bosses.

"Our union arose out of the fact that the leaders of the old union did not fight for the interests of the workers, and undertook a campaign of expulsions against all those who wished to organize such a fight in the interests of the workers. The Associated expelled 22 leading workers in Paterson before the National Textile Workers Union was organized. This policy is still practiced by the A. F. of L. leadership, who expelled tens of thousands of needle workers, textile workers, miners and others. . . . We believe that the first step towards the establishment of one militant union in Paterson will be through the organization of an effective and united struggle against the bosses.

For a United Strike

"We are again sending an appeal to the membership of the Associated and the Executive of this organization for a united strike. At the same time, we are doing everything possible to make the strike effective. We are calling upon all workers of Paterson to

join in the strike. We suggest that it would be much better for the workers to meet in their shops, elect their representatives to a shop conference, and there work out their demands and the strike date. If, however, despite our proposal, the Associated calls the strike for Wednesday, May 17th, as they announced, we call upon all workers to join in the strike on that date. We call upon the workers in each mill, irrespective of the strike date, to elect their shop committee, to work out their shop grievances and to present a solid front against the bosses.

"Fraternally yours,

"Executive Committee, Paterson District, National Textile Workers Union."

On May 17 and 18 Frank Schweitzer, organizer of the Associated, began negotiations with the Mayor's Committee on the Silk Situation in Paterson and agreed to postpone the strike. However, pressure of his own members compelled him to set the date for May 22.

Mr. Schweitzer, however, agreed to read the following resolution of the Mayor's Committee to a strike meeting:

"Resolved, that the Mayor's Committee on the Silk Situation in Paterson sends its high respects and fraternal regards to the silk workers of our city. We ask them, at this critical time in our industry, for their continued patience and confidence . . . for a just and peaceful settlement of all points at issue. We earnestly plead for the avoidance of a strike which this committee deems unwise and most disastrous to all concerned especially in view of the steps suggested by the President of the United States for carrying out a bill now presented to Congress which provides for a nation-wide plan for the organization of industry so as to provide work for the millions of unemployed through shorter hours and high wages." (My italics—J.B.)

Every newspaper in Paterson pleaded with the silk workers not to strike but to wait until Roosevelt's N.R.A. was enacted. Due to Schweitzer's double-dealing, rejection of the united front and failure to prepare, this initial strike was crippled. Only a few shops came out. Some little gains were achieved. But it indicated what would happen in the great strike which took place two months later.

The Paterson silk workers marked time. They waited to see what the New Deal would bring them.

* * * * *

When we survey the union situation in the silk industry just before the call for the general strike we find the vast majority of the workers unorganized. In Paterson the Associated local (U.T.W.) had about 200 members in good standing. The National Textile Workers had an equal number. In the dye houses there was no local union, although the National had begun organizing in two of the largest plants.

In most Pennsylvania silk centers only skeleton U.T.W. local unions existed, consisting of a few skilled craftsmen. In Allentown besides a small U.T.W. local of about 50 members the workers in May, 1933, organized an independent union which struck and organized three or four mills. The ribbon weavers of that section organized the Lehigh Valley Ribbon Weavers Association (Independent) with a few hundred members. The 50,000 throwsters were wholly unorganized.

In August 1932 representatives of a few of these small U.T.W. local unions had met at Allentown, and set up the American Federation of Silk Workers. They elected Russell W. Wood of Easton, as President and Frank Schweitzer of Paterson, Secretary-Treasurer.

* * * * *

As soon as the cotton code was adopted, Francis J. Gorman, Vice-President of the U.T.W., rushed from Washington, D. C. to Rhode Island. The Providence, R. I., papers quoted Mr. Gorman at that time as saying "Now that the code is adopted we need conciliation and understanding—not strikes."

During the month of June three spontaneous strikes broke out in Providence, involving about 1800 workers. These were led by the National Textile Workers. In Pawtucket and Central Falls, R. I., about 1,000 silk weavers from eight mills struck, under U.T.W. leadership, for \$2 per 100,000 picks and for four instead of six looms. It was these strikes that Mr. Gorman was so anxious to prevent.

The three Providence strikes under National leadership succeeded in winning partial demands. The Pawtucket strike was decapitated by the U.T.W. leaders and was "settled" for \$1.85 per 100,000 picks (about \$18 for a 40 hour week), and six looms.

When the cotton code was published the silk workers gasped in astonishment. It was Code No. 1 under the N.R.A. And the cotton code provided \$12 and \$13 minimum wages for a 40-hour week! This was not all. The cotton code included the production of rayon cloth under its provisions. Seventy-five per cent of all workers in the silk-rayon weaving trade then came under this cotton code! There could be only one answer to this double-deal—STRIKE!

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but merely said that since the National Labor Board had had two weeks in which to act, "mediation" was now too late.

While news came on the first day that other silk centers were striking or preparing to strike, Russell W. Wood, President of the American Federation of Silk Workers (A. F. of L.), declared on September 1, that "the silk workers' strike call, issued at Paterson affects only the workers in the Paterson area." Mr. Wood said that he had told Frank Schweitzer, Executive Secretary of the American Federation of Silk Workers, that he (Mr. Wood) would not sanction a general strike in Easton, Pa., or in Northampton County. Thus the splitting tactics which characterized every move of the A. F. of L. leadership during the strike were begun by Wood on the second day of the strike.

Meanwhile the silk manufacturers of Paterson cynically watched the development of the strike, satisfied that it was in safe hands. Max Baker, Secretary of the Paterson Silk Manufacturers Association said on the first day that his Association's shops would close down and that he was now "more interested in what was happening out of town." The Silk Association of America had already drafted its silk code which was identical with the cotton code so far as wages, hours, and conditions were concerned.

The bosses knew that the strike was coming. Their warehouses were stocked with goods ready to be sent to the dye houses to be dyed and finished as orders were received. The numerous little silk manufacturers also felt that the cotton code which governed rayon goods manufacture threatened their economic existence by placing them under the control of the big rayon fibre producing trusts (DuPont, Industrial, American, Glanzstoff, Viscose, Tubize) and the huge cotton interests. So long as the strike did not immediately threaten their immediate interests the bosses were not averse to seeing the workers carry out a mass demonstration against the cotton code and the cotton code authorities in Washington.

Along these lines there developed a real united front between the A. F. of L. leaders and the small silk manufacturers. Instead of fighting for the settlement of the strike on the basis of the strike demands, and directing this struggle against the bosses for direct settlement between the employers and the workers, the A. F. of L. leaders attempted to use the strike to revise the rayon section of the cotton code in the interests of the bosses. Their next objective was to get through the N.R.A. a national closed shop agreement recognizing only the A. F. of L. union irrespective of wages or conditions and thus destroy the National Textile Workers Union and the independent unions.

CHAPTER IV

The Great Silk Strike Begins

No strike of major proportions in this industry ever opened with such

lack of preparations and such hesitancy.

Late in August, a small meeting of about 40 members of the Associated met at its headquarters in Paterson, drew up a wage-schedule and decided to call a strike. After many declarations and postponements the date was set for Thursday, August 31, 1933.

Meanwhile, at the headquarters of the National Textile Workers Union, in Paterson, the leaders waited to see what the Associated union would do. Many members of the National believed that the A. F. of L. union would never call a strike and hesitated to take leadership. The N.T.W.U., however, called a mass meeting the day before the strike and mobilized the workers for battle when the call was issued.

Without consultation with the masses the "leadership" of the Associated local drew up the following basic demands: (1) \$36 a week, 30 hours a week; (2) the two-loom system; (3) no night work; (4) recognition of the Associated union and shop committees.

Since weavers were getting \$1.85 for 100,000 picks (or about \$18 a week of 40 hours) on four looms in Paterson these demands repre-

sented an increase of over 200 per cent.

The strike was declared in the name of the American Federation of Silk Workers (U.T.W.). Six thousand Paterson silk workers answered the strike call on the first day, August 3. Picket lines proceeded to close down every silk shop in Paterson. The ribbon weavers of Paterson were not called out and remained at work during the whole course of the strike, ultimately defeating their brother ribbon workers in Allentown, Stroudsburg, etc. For two weeks before the strike date Pres. McMahon and other U.T.W. leaders had been busy in Washington working with the National Labor Board to head off the strike.

On the day set for the strike, August 31, Senator Wagner sent a telegram demanding that the workers remain at work and that the bosses and the workers submit their "differences" to the National Labor Board for mediation. This telegram was published in the Paterson Call on the morning of the strike. It was the first of a series of strike-breaking acts of the National Labor Board carried out during the strike. Mr. Schweitzer at a strike meeting did not denounce this act

To this end the A. F. of L. leaders worked in closest co-operation with the N. R. A. and the National Labor Board under Wagner. In these efforts they were given the utmost support by the Lovestone renegades (Keller, Rubinstein, etc.) and by the Socialist Party leaders.

Within a week, the silk workers of Allentown, Easton, Philipsburg, Emaus, Stroudsburg, Scranton, and most silk centers of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania had shut down the mills and joined the strike, endorsing the main strike demands. Fifty thousand silk workers were out. They were striking not only against the coolie wages of the cotton code and the proposed silk code (\$13 a week) but also against the speed-up system and the starvation wages forced upon them by the bosses during four years of the crisis. After all the ballyhoo about the N.R.A., and the Blue Eagle; after the constant rise in the cost of living; after all the promises of the "New Deal," they were faced with the stark reality—silk workers' wages were being forced down under the N.R.A. codes to the level of the lowest paid section of the textile industry.

But these workers generally did not know that the very leaders of the A. F. of L. who now asked them to strike under their leadership

had participated in drafting these very codes.

The National Textile Workers Union pointed out in July 1933 that the cotton, wool and silk codes of the textile mill owners would result in more misery, part time work and unemployment. In opposing the N.R.A.-manufacturers codes the N.T.W.U. delegation declared at the Washington code hearings that the minimum wage (\$12 and \$13 for silk and cotton and \$13 and \$14 for wool) is about \$20 a week less than is required by the conservative U. S. Department of Labor as necessary to maintain a family on a "minimum of health and decency." There is nothing in the codes to prevent the employers from forcing all wages down to the minimum. There is no guarantee of a full 40hour week's work or guarantees for any definite amount of employment a year. Hence, part-time work and part-time starvation wages become the rule under the codes. The employers' codes do not forbid or limit stretch-out and speed-up, thus giving the bosses the right to squeeze out greater production in less time. The exclusion of apprentices, outside help, and others from the codes paves the way for special discrimination against women, youth and southern Negro textile labor. Under these codes the employers have the right to organize company unions and to maintain the open shop. The workers are not guaranteed or protected in their right to strike. Courts, police and gunmen can be used to break strikes.

THE TEXTILE WORKERS' OWN CODE, PRESENTED BY THE NATIONAL TEXTILE WORKERS UNION, DEMANDED:

- 1. One fixed minimum weekly and yearly wage for every worker in the industry, North and South. No more than 40 hours per week. No less than 30 hours a week and 40 weeks a year.
- 2. For a real minimum wage of 60c an hour or \$720 a year on the basis of guaranteed working time.
- 3. Unemployment insurance, to be paid by the industry and government equal to above amount for all part-time or unemployed textile workers. Those receiving more than minimum wages to be paid sufficient to equalize their average wages on a 40-week basis.
- 4. Increase of 35 per cent for all textile workers now receiving above this proposed minimum.
 - 5. All wages to be adjusted upward as prices rise.
- 6. Women, youth and Negroes to receive equal pay for equal work.
- 7. For improved working conditions: (a) A 40 per cent cut in speed and machinery per worker without wage reduction. (b) Abolition of piece work. (c) Lost time at place of work to be paid for at regular hour rates. (d) Regular lunch period of not less than one half-hour. (e) Proper sanitation and health equipment.
- 8. The right to organize, strike and picket when demands are not otherwise granted. Open elections for shop committees which are to be recognized by employers. The right to belong to any union including independent unions and the National Textile Workers Union.
- 9. No night work for women and minors between hours of 6 P.M. and 6 A.M.
- 10. No child labor under 16 years of age. Children thus laid off to be given full maintenance by the industry and government. Young workers between 16 and 18 years to receive full wages but to be employed not more than 6 hours a day, 5 days a week.

11. Negro workers shall not be discriminated against and shall have the right to work at all occupations and enjoy equally all the provisions contained in this workers' textile code.

The above textile workers' code provided a complete basis for real national silk strike demands. The A. F. of L. demands for \$36 a week, 30 hours a week, two looms for weavers, did express the aspiration of the silk workers for a decent living as against the N.R.A. slave textile codes, and they were fighting to win them. But in the minds of the A. F. of L. leadership there was no intention to fight to win even a decent part of these demands.

CHAPTER V

The Neck of the Bottle

Within a radius of fifteen miles of Paterson, about 85 dye houses finish, print, process and dye about 90 per cent of all the silk and rayon piece goods produced in the whole country. These dye houses, along the Passaic River, were located many years ago. An abundance of water and favorable climate; a generous water commission; cheap and plentiful labor supply; brutal and mercenary county police, politicians and labor grafters to keep labor unorganized; the national ladies' dress goods market in New York City within truck haulage—all combined to favor the development of the huge dying industry in this section.

Any organization that seriously intended to tie up the whole silk industry on a national scale could not afford to neglect this strategic part of the industry. For not many pieces of silk or rayon goods, no matter where it was woven, could reach the market until it passed through these dye houses.

Here was the neck of the bottle in relation to the whole industry. Here a determined and uncompromising leadership could throttle the entire industry and win a decisive victory for the silk and dye workers all along the line.

That the dye workers were ready to fight for better conditions could be seen by the short strike of the 2000 workers of the Textile Piece Dye Works at Fairlawn, N. J., followed by the walk-out of the 1200 dyers of the Weidman Plant of the big United Piece Dye Works in the month of June, 1933. But the leaders of the A. F. of L. silk union had completely ignored these dye workers.

Some of the dye houses had been struck in 1919, but there had been no effective general dye strike at any time, since the industry was established, in spite of long hours, low pay and unhealthful laborious work. Company guards and gunmen, stool-pigeons and deputies maintained a state of terror in the dye houses and in the small towns in which they are located.

The dye bosses, on the other hand, are united in a powerful association called the Institute of Dyers and Printers devoted to meting out

swift punishment to the trade "chiselers" through gangster raids on the concerns who dye cloth under a certain minimum and to enforcing slave conditions upon their workers by the same methods.

* * * * *

The Paterson district organization of the National Textile Workers Union concentrated upon the United Piece Dye Works with large plants in Paterson, Hawthorne and Lodi, N. J., employing over 6,000 dye workers. When the silk strike was called on August 31, the National Textile Workers Union had succeeded in effecting an almost 100% organization inside the Weidman dye plant in Paterson.

On September 5, the day after Labor Day, a committee representing all departments of the Weidman plant called upon Mr. Murphy, the General Superintendent of the mighty United Piece Dye Works, in which the banking house of Lehman Bros. and other Wall Street concerns have big interests. While the committee presented the demands the workers stood with folded arms at their dye tubs and machines. The company's answer was an arrogant rejection of all demands. The word was given to strike. The steam and power was shut off by a committee. The dye workers on all shifts came out and marched to their strike headquarters, at 612 River Street, under the leadership of Moe Brown, Secretary of the Paterson District, National Textile Workers Union.

A strike committee of 40 was elected and drew up general strike demands as follows:

- 1. Minimum 30 hours and maximum 40 hours a week, the 5-day week.
- 2. No split-shifts; all work to be done in straight shifts.
- 3. 75-80c an hour for men; 50c an hour for women. (Note: Women do not do the same work as men in the dye houses.)
- 4. Equal pay for equal work in all cases.
- 5. Recognition of the elected shop committee and of the National Textile Workers Union.
 - 6. No discrimination against any worker for strike activities.
- 7. Demands for departments and shops to be adopted by the workers.

The dye strikers' picket lines marched from plant to plant, closing them down one after another until within five days over 9,000 dye workers were on strike in the Paterson area.

The National Textile Workers Union immediately declared the solidarity of the dye strikers with the other silk strikers and proposed that one general silk and dye strike committee be set up uniting all sections, all crafts, all unions involved in the national strike. The answer of the Schweitzers, Kellers and McMahons of the U.T.W. was that no dye strike should be called at this time.

On the morning of September 8, the Executive Board of the Associated Silk Workers Union (A. F. of L.) voted against participation in the dye strike. They reported this decision to a meeting in Turn Hall that evening and were hooted down by their rank and file members. They then decided to call a "pacific" strike in the dye houses ordering their members not to picket. They enlisted the aid of John Zawacki, head of a company union with 400 members in the Textile Piece Dye Works and brought in an expelled member of the Communist Party, Jack Rubinstein (Lovestone renegade) to cover their splitting role with a coat of red paint. They recruited Charles Pirolo, Democratic Party ward-heeler and his gangster elements and other shady characters. These worthies imposed upon the dyers' local No. 1733 of the U.T.W., made contact with the Dye Institute and prepared to split, defeat and sell out the dye strike.

The A. F. of L. silk and dye workers ignored this "leadership." Under the National's slogan of one picket line they united in mass struggle to close down the remaining dye plants. Among these were the National Piece Dye Works at East Paterson employing 1500 workers and the huge Lodi plant of the United Piece Dye Works then employing 4,000 workers. In 40 years the Lodi plant had never been completely shut down, although a large group of its workers participated in the big Passaic strike of 1926. It stood like a fortress with its long, low sheds running for a mile along the Lodi highway. Unless this plant was struck the dye strike could not become effective. Every speech of the N.T.W.U. leaders between September 5 and September 10 ended with "Lodi must come out!" Echoing all along the picket lines was the cry, "Lodi must come out!"

The company tried to counter by giving a 10% increase in wages. They fired every known member of the National Textile Workers Union. They tried desperately to hold the plant at work. Twice the Paterson picket lines marched on Lodi and twice they were repulsed by tear gas and black-jacks of the police and company guards.

The general dye strike call was issued for Monday, September 11, and is reproduced on the opposite page.

OF ALL DYE HOUSE WORKERS IS DECLARED FOR

MONDAY, SEPT. 11, 1933

All dye workers - men, women, truck drivers and maintenance men --Go to your shop Monday morning. Do not go inside. Form a mass Picket line
Close down the shop.
Bring every worker out.

Come in a body as soon as your mill is shut down to-

DYE STRIKE HEADQUARTERS 612 RIVER ST. and 222 PATERSON ST.

Over 6,000 dye workers of 30 shops are already out under the leadership of the National Textile Workers Union. The N. T. W. U. has organized and is leading the Dye Workers in this fight for Bread. Join up, organize and fight! Join with them-for these demands-

- 75c and 80c an hour for men.
- 2. 50c an hour for women.
- 3. Minimum 30 hours and maximum 40 hours a week.
- 4. No split shifts; all work to be done in straight shifts. Recognition of the National Textile Workers Union and a
- Workers Committee in every department.
- 6. Other demands for departments and shops to be adopted by the workers.

United Piece Dye Workers of Lodi! STRIKE MONDAY FOR THESE DEMANDS

JOIN with the Strikers of the Weidmann and Hawthorne Plants of the United Piece Dye Works for a speedy Victory.

PICKET THE MILL and MARCH TO -

THIRD WARD REPUBLICAN CLUB HALL

22 Clark Street near Garfield Street Garfield, N. J.

ALL DYE WORKERS I

Stand United under the Leadership of the National Textile Workers Union! Let no one divide your ranks. ONE STRIKE! ONE PICKET LINE! ONE STRIKE COMMITTEE!

The Dye Workers pledge a United Front with the strikers in the silk mills for a joint victory ! No settlement of the Strike without an Open Vote of ALL Strikers regardless of union affiliation. GENERAL DYE WORKERS STRIKE COMMITTEE . 612 RIVER St., Paterson NATIONAL TEXTILE WORKERS UNION - 222 Paterson Street, Paterson

On that Monday morning a scouting division of 500 pickets marched to Lodi and engaged 400 police, sheriffs and gunmen while the main body of pickets marched to the National Piece Dye Works in East Paterson on the way to Lodi. There they took two massive gates off their hinges; the dye workers ordered their managers to close the plant and, re-enforced by these 1500 workers, marched on to Lodi.

Five thousand A. F. of L. members and N.T.W.U. members battled side by side at Lodi, resisting guns and gas for hours. At 3 p. m. Superintendent Murphy sent for a committee. Moe Brown and the committee brought back word to the waiting 5000 fighters that the plant would close. At 5 p. m. 4000 Lodi dye workers marched out, joining hands with their fellow strikers for all the demands.

Lodi came out! All dye houses of Paterson and vicinity together with the plants in New York City were now shut down. Monday, September 11, 1933, was a great day for the national silk strike, for on that day the neck of the bottle was closed. No scab silk or rayon cloth could henceforth reach the market no matter where it was woven.

* * * * *

And now the silk workers, re-enforced by the militant dye strikers and inspired by their swift action, were in the most favorable position to win substantial demands. For the first time in the history of the silk industry, from 65,000 to 70,000 silk and dye workers had the machinery practically tied up. The bosses' hopes of a peaceful stoppage, while they disposed of their surplus silk goods, were shattered by the closing down of the dye houses. Besides they faced a determined leadership in the National Textile Workers Union and a fighting rank and file that could be depended upon to smash every attempt of the dye bosses and their thugs to reopen the plants.

Alarmed by the swift success of the dye strike the bosses' associations and the capitalist press wired to Washington for help. The U. S. Department of Labor responded by sending Mr. John A. Moffitt, labor conciliator, to Paterson.

The bosses wanted to break the solidarity of the dye strikers and to separate them from the leadership of the National Textile Workers Union, which called and led the strike. To do this they tried every hoary scheme and weapon in the arsenal of government and A. F. of L. strike-breaking.

The N.R.A. suddenly took note of the great silk strike and set a date—September 12—for a silk code hearing in Washington.

CHAPTER VI

The "Red Scare"

Over 3,000 dye strikers had joined the National Textile Workers Union. The leadership of the strike was admittedly in their hands. Its National Secretary, Ann Burlak, and its National Organizer, John Ballam, came to Paterson at the beginning of the silk strike giving active leadership to the workers. The New Jersey district secretary of the T.U.U.L., Al Fisher, took over the Lodi-Passaic sector of the dye strike front. Moe Brown, Paterson District Secretary of the N.T.W.U., led the Paterson sector and was daily in the forefront of the struggle on the picket lines together with Herbert Snell, chairman of the General Dye Strike Committee. Rebecca Grecht, N. J. District Organizer of the Communist Party, led picket lines and spoke at strike meetings.

All of these leaders are members of the Communist Party which threw all its forces into the struggle of the workers for a real victory against the bosses and the bosses' N.R.A. codes. It was due to the active organizing work of the Paterson section of the Communist Party within the Weidman plant that the dye strike struck such firm roots and developed so swiftly.

The Socialist Party through Norman Thomas declared that "this is no time to strike" and that the N.R.A. would lead to "socialism". The Greens, Wolls, Lewises, Hillmans, McMahons of the A. F. of L. were more positive than Johnson or Roosevelt himself in praising the N.R.A. They voted for and supported the codes with their open shop provisions.

It was the Communist Party alone which first warned the working class of the real meaning of the New Deal, the N.R.A. and the slave codes adopted to benefit the boss class and solve the crisis at the expense of the workers.

The Secretary of the Communist Party, Earl Browder, defined the New Deal and its effects. This definition is so concise, so accurate and places the Communist Party position on the N.R.A. so clearly before the workers that we are reproducing it, in part, here:

The New Deal represents the rapid development of bourgeois policy under the blows of the crisis, the sharpening of the class struggle at home and the imminence of a new imperialist war. The New Deal is a policy of slashing the living standards at home and fighting for markets abroad, for the simple purpose of maintaining the profits of finance capital. It is a policy of brutal oppression at home and of imperialist war abroad. It represents a further sharpening and deepening of the world crisis. . . .

Under the New Deal we have entered a period of the greatest contradictions between the words and deeds of the heads of government.

Hoover refused the bonus to the veterans and called out the troops against them, causing Hushka and Carlson to be killed. Roosevelt gave the veterans a camp and food and instead of sending the troops he sent his wife to meet them. But where Hoover denied the bonus, Roosevelt also denied the bonus and added to it a cut of \$500,000,000 in pensions and disability allowances.

Roosevelt's international phrases have only served to cover the launching of the sharpest trade war the world has seen, with the United States operating on the world market with a cheapened dollar, with inflation that is carrying out large scale dumping.

Roosevelt's election campaign slogan of unemployment insurance and relief by the federal government has been followed in office by refusal of insurance and drastic cutting down of relief, the institution of forced labor camps, etc.

Under the slogan of higher wages for the workers he is carrying out the biggest slashing of wages that the country has ever seen. Under the slogan of "freedom to join any trade union he may choose" the worker is driven into company unions or into the discredited A. F. of L., being denied the right to strike; while the militant unions are being attacked with the aim to destroy them.

With the cry, "take the government out of the hands of Wall Street," Roosevelt is carrying through the greatest drive for extending trustification and monopoly, exterminating independent producers and small capitalists, and establishing the power of finance capital more thoroughly than ever before. He has turned the public treasury into the pockets of the big capitalists. While Hoover gave \$3,000,000,000 in a year, Roosevelt has given \$5,000,000,000 in three months. . . .

What are the main features of the New Deal? Let us consider it as a whole, as a system of measures, and bring together all the various features embodied in new legislation and actions in Washington. We can sum up the features of the New Deal under the following heads: (1) Trustification; (2) Inflation; (3) Direct subsidies to finance capital; (4) Taxation of the masses; (5) The economy program; (6) The farm program; (7) Military and naval preparations; (8) The movement toward militarization, direct and indirect, of labor.

First, trustification: Under the mask of the "radical" slogan of "controlled production," the Industrial Recovery Act has merely speeded up and centralized the process of trustification which has long been the dominant feature of American economy. There is now being carried out a clean-up of all the "little fellows." They are forced to come under the codes formulated by the trusts, which will have the force of law. The "little fellows'" doom is sealed and they are busy making the best terms possible for a "voluntary" assimilation before they are wiped out. Capitalist price-fixing has been given the force of law and the profits of the great trusts are guaranteed by the government. As for "controlled production," we have the word of an administration spokesman that "competition is not eliminated; it is only raised to a higher plane." That is quite true. The further strengthening of the power of monopoly capital is intensifying all of the chaos, antagonisms, disproportions within American economy. "Controlled production" is impossible upon the basis of capitalist private property. There is only the growth of the power of the big capitalists and the intensification of all social and economic contradictions.

Second, inflation: The continuous cheapening of the dollar serves several purposes. First, it serves for a general cutting down of the living standards of the masses through higher domestic prices, and especially a reduction of workers' real wages (already over 20 per cent), and if we study the course of prices in the last few days you will see that the reduction of real wages is now speeding up very fast. Second, inflation results in helping restore solvency to the banks and financial institutions by increasing the market value of their depreciated securities. Third, inflation carries out a partial expropriation of the savings and investments of the middle classes. Fourth, it results in the creation of a temporary expanding market to stimulate industrial production for a time, through the rush of speculators and profiteers to lay up stocks for higher prices. Fifth, inflation results in the launching of a tremendous commercial war of pricecutting and dumping on the world market. All of these results of inflation serve to strengthen finance capital, build up its profits at the cost of sharpened exploitation of the masses at home, and lead directly to imperialist war.

Third, the direct subsidies: This is only an enlargement of Hoover's policy of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. Many billions of dollars as gifts, disguised as "loans," are being poured into the coffers of the big capitalists. It all comes out of the lowered living standards of the masses, the expropriation of the savings of the petty bourgeoisie, and out of mass taxation.

Fourth, the taxation program: There is being carried out under the New Deal an enormous shifting of even the present limited burdens of taxation on property and big income away from them and onto the shoulders of the masses, the workers and farmers. Almost all the increased taxation is in the form of sales taxes of all kinds, indirect taxation that falls upon the small consumers. All apparent measures of increasing income tax rates have merely fallen upon the middle class, while the big capitalists relieve themselves of all income taxes, as exemplified by the biggest capitalists of them all, Morgan, Otto Kahn, Mitchell, etc., who have gone for years now without paying any income tax.

Fifth, the economy program: While new taxes have been piled up and new billions of dollars given to the banks and trusts, "economy" is the rule for all government expenditure that reaches the masses or the little fellows. The government sets the example for the entire capitalist class with wholesale wage cuts, with rationalization, mass discharges, etc., of government employees. The war veterans have their disability allowances cut by half a billion dollars; unemployment relief is substituted by forced labor camps; social services of all kinds are heavily slashed or discontinued altogether. That is the economy program of the New Deal.

Sixth, the farm program: While millions of workers are starving for lack of food, the government turns its energies to cutting down farm production. Growing cotton is today being plowed under by direction of the government. That is the New Deal. A 30 per cent tax is placed on bread in order that farmers shall get (at best) the same return for a smaller amount of wheat. Those farmers, in the best case, will still only maintain their bankrupt situation while the masses will have less bread at higher prices. The mortgage holders will absorb the great bulk of this government subsidy, at the expense of the stomachs of the masses. This year's wheat crop, already in the hands of the speculators, bought from the farmers at about 25 cents a bushel, sharply rises in price with enormous profits for the speculators. By the time the farmers can get 80 cents to \$1 for the coming crop, the dollar will be so inflated that it will be worth just about that 25 cents they got for wheat last year. Farmers will be at an even greater disadvantage in buying industrial products at monopoly prices sharply rising under the Allotment Plan provided in the New Deal, which is used as an attempt to divide workers from farmers and set them in sharp rivalry, but the masses, including the farmers, pay all the bills.

Seventh, the military and naval preparations: This is one of the chief features of the New Deal. The wild commercial war on the world markets, sharpened to an enormous degree by the falling value of the dollar, has already disrupted the London Economic Conference, has brought all imperialist antagonisms to a critical point. British-American relations are clashing in every field. Japanese-

American relations are growing sharper. A government which carries out this bandit policy of inflation and dumping, while at the same time driving down the living standards of the masses at home, such a government really should logically go heavily armed. An inevitable part of the New Deal is therefore the tremendous building of new battleships, cruisers, new poison gases, explosives, new tanks and other machinery of destruction for the army, new military roads, the increase of armed forces, increased salaries for the officers. Industrial recovery is thus to be hastened by working the war industries overtime. Such war preparations have never been seen before since 1917.

Eighth, and finally, there is the movement towards militarization of labor. This is the most direct and open part of the fascist features of the New Deal. The sharpest expression of this is the forced labor camps with the dollar-a-day wage. Already some 250,000 workers are in these camps. This forced labor has several distinct aims. First, it sets a standard of wages towards which the capitalists will try to drive the so-called free labor everywhere. It smashes the old traditional wage standards. Secondly, it breaks up the system of unemployed relief and establishes the principle that work must be done for all relief given. Thirdly, it furnishes cheap labor for government projects, mostly of a military nature, and for some favored capitalists. Fourthly, it takes the most virile and active unemployed workers out of the cities where, as government spokesmen have said, they constitute "a danger to law and order," and places these "dangerous" people under military control. Fifthly, it sets up a military reserve of human cannon-fodder already being trained for the coming war.

But the provisions of the Industrial Recovery Act regarding labor provide a much more large scale effort at militarization of labor, though in quite different form from the forced labor camps. In the industries, for the employed workers, the aim is to establish a semi-military regime, in many ways similar to the old war-time legislation, under government fixed wages, compulsory arbitration of all disputes with the government as arbitrator, abolition of the right to strike and independent organization of workers. These things are to be achieved through the industrial codes worked out by employers and given the force of law by the signature of Roosevelt, supported when and where necessary by the American Federation of Labor and the Socialist Party, who have already entered wholeheartedly into this pretty scheme.

In the labor section of the New Deal are to be seen the clearest examples of the tendencies towards fascism. It is the American brother to Mussolini's "corporate state," with state-controlled labor unions closely tied up with and under the direction of the employers.

Here we have also the sharpest American example of the role of the Socialist Party and the trade union bureaucracy, the role of social-fascism as the bearer among the masses of the program of fascism, who pave the way for the establishment of fascist control over the masses. (From speech of Earl Browder at Extraordinary Conference of Communist Party U.S.A., beld in New York City, July 7-10, 1933.)

When Mr. Moffitt, of the U.S. Department of Labor, came to Paterson, his first statement after meeting the bosses, was that the dye strike was "treasonable." Moffitt, whose title is "Labor Conciliator," next publicly stated that, if necessary, city, county and state forces would be used to break the dye strike. The workers had already met and defeated the bosses' armed guard. They were not terrorized.

The Paterson boss-press and Mr. Moffitt denounced the National Textile Workers Union as a Communist union, a red union, a "left" union, as radicals, etc. Moffitt declared he would negotiate only with such organizations as upheld "American institutions." He called in a few hand-picked officials of Local 1733 U.T.W. and started secret conferences with an A. F. of L. committee headed by Zawacki of the company union and the bosses' Institute of Dyers' and Printers.

The National Textile Workers Union and General Dye Strike Committee sent a committee leading a picket line of 4,000 to the Alexander Hamilton Hotel where the secret negotiations were being held. They were met by 500 police and their committee denied admittance. Telegrams were sent by the dye strikers to Senator Wagner, General Johnson, Secretary Frances Perkins, President Roosevelt, protesting against violation of Section 7-a of the N.R.A. and demanding the right to be represented at hearings presided over by a U. S. government official through representatives of their own choice. No answer was received to these telegrams. Moffitt was apparently acting with the full knowledge of his superiors. He had orders to use the A. F. of L. to break the dye strike.

In answer to the Red scare the Communists openly stated their point of view on the class struggle as Party members. Their message was received with applause and enthusiasm whenever they spoke. Earl Browder, Secretary of the Communist Party, spoke in Paterson to 10,000 strikers at Sandy Hill Park. The Daily Worker, which was the only paper reporting the workers' side of the strike, was distributed and sold in large numbers daily. Scores of strikers joined the Communist Party. The "Red Scare" was met and defeated by the

"Reds" themselves coming forward as the most devoted workers and leaders in the strike. The "Red Scare" didn't work in Paterson.

The red scare itself had no effect upon the workers but the reports coming from the secret conferences that the bosses were about to recognize the A. F. of L. union and give substantial increases did have their intended effect. From the time that the A. F. of L. dye committee began to meet with Moffitt and the bosses (September 15) to the announcement of an agreement (Sept. 25), all the agencies of the bosses were used to get the dye strikers into the A. F. of L. union. During this period thousands of dyers took out A. F. of L. cards. They believed that the strike would be settled by the A. F. of L. because, as many workers said, "The A. F. of L. is closer to the boss and they will recognize it." The dye strikers were told that there was to be a closed shop and only A. F. of L. members would get jobs. These rank and file members of the A. F. of L. nevertheless maintained the closest united front with the National Textile Workers Union members on the picket lines and accepted its leadership.

On September 25 the A. F. of L. leaders reported to a packed meeting in Turn Hall the agreement which they accepted after ten days of secret negotiations. Rubenstein, Keller, Schweitzer, Pirolo, Yanerelli, and other U.T.W. local leaders urged its adoption. But they never completed the reading of the agreement! When they reached the infamous point No. 3 the strikers broke into an uproar of hisses, boos and catcalls. Then the strikers, after defeating the sellout agreement and discharging their committee, rushed from Turn Hall to the N.T.W.U. dye strike headquarters on River St., bringing the repudiated agreement with them. Section No. 3 read, "In order to appease those we represent (U.T.W.) we respectfully request that you grant us an increase in wages over that paid prior to the strike."

"Conciliator" Moffitt, who engineered this "agreement", on learning of its unanimous rejection by the A. F. of L. membership of Local 1733, remarked, "It is incredible. In my twenty years of experience with labor I have never known them to reject a settlement in which the employers agreed to recognize the union."

This proposed agreement is indeed so incredible for its bare faced attempt to sell out a 100% strike and shows such contempt for the interests of the dye strikers whom the A. F. of L. committee pretended to represent that we are reprinting it here in full:

"We, the duly authorized representatives of Local Union No. 1733 of the United Textile Workers of America, an affiliate of the Amer-

ican Federation of Labor, submit herewith a list of proposals, the purpose of which is to terminate as speedily as possible the unpleasant controversy existent in the dyeing and printing industry. In presenting these requests for your consideration, it is not our purpose to hamper you in the conduct of your business, but to assist as far as possible a much needed stabilization of the industry. In your consideration of these requests, it must be understood that we are not asking for a closed shop, we are asking for a union shop. Therefore, it is hoped that the following articles will meet with your unanimous approval.

"First. That the members of the Institute of Dyers and Printers will recognize and deal only with the United Textile Workers in complying with the collective bargaining provision of Section Seven of the National Recovery Act.

"Second. We recognize the right of the employers to hire and discharge, but should an employee believe that he or she was unjustly discharged, he or she shall have the right to appeal their case to an authority designated by the company to pass upon such appeals, and should the appeal be sustained, the wages of the appellant will be retroactive from the date upon which he or she was discharged.

"Third. In order to appease those we represent (U. T. W.) we respectfully request that you grant an increase in wages over that paid prior to the strike.

"Fourth. That all strikers, United Textile Workers, shall return to work without discrimination, and that no resentment will be held against them because of their activities in the strike. If, however, it is proven that any member or members of the U.T.W. assisted in the destruction of property during the period of the controversy, such members shall not be considered under this article.

"Fifth. All detail matters shall be adjusted in conference between shop committees and employers.

"LOCAL NO. 1733, UNITED TEXTILE WORKERS OF AMERICA."

The official government strikebreaker, Moffitt, and his U.T.W.-Lovestoneite assistants found that the united front of the rank and file dye strikers from below under the leadership of the Communists and the National Textile Workers Union had been built too strongly to be so easily or so cheaply broken for the bosses. The representative of the U.S. Department of Labor did not recognize the N.T.W.U. but the dye strikers did.

The dye strike went on with the greater vigor and determination. Thousands of dye strikers joined the N.T.W.U. Scores joined the Communist Party and the Young Communist League.

CHAPTER VII

McMahon Tries to Sell Out the Strike

Upon the announcement from Washington that a hearing would be held September 12 on the silk code, the N.T.W.U. called a national silk workers' conference to draw up a silk workers' code and to send rank and file delegates to the hearing.

This national conference met Sunday, September 9, at 222 Paterson Street, Paterson, N. J. Delegates were present from the N.T.W.U., the Allentown Silk Workers Union, the Lehigh Valley Ribbon Workers Union, from Easton, Philipsburg, Scranton, New York, New England and from Burlington, N. C. Resolutions and a workers' code were adopted (See page 15 for details on workers' code). A delegation of 32 was elected by their local strike committees to represent the independent unions and the N.T.W.U. at the N.R.A. silk code hearing. Ann Burlak was elected to head the delegation.

What took place at these hearings is described by Ann Burlak, as follows:

"When our Paterson delegation, tired and dusty from an all-night auto ride, walked into the spacious ballroom of the Willard Hotel in Washington, the 'big boys' of the U.T.W. were all comfortably lounging around waiting for the silk hearing to open. We also noticed a number of silk workers in the room, although at that time we did not know all of them.

"Mr. McMahon was the first to be called upon to speak in the name of labor. He made a rather weak, apologetic speech, not once mentioning the splendid militant struggle of the striking silk workers. When Mr. Whiteside, chairman of the silk hearing, asked him whether his organization was responsible for the big silk strike, McMahon answered, 'Oh no, sir, the United Textile Workers did not start this strike. In fact, we tried to stop it, but the workers went over our heads.'

"'Will you be ready to send the strikers back to their looms if we make some temporary arrangement,' asked Whiteside. 'Of course,' said McMahon. 'We always stand ready to co-operate with the government.'

"Gorman, Kelly, Schweitzer followed McMahon to the rostrum, each making the same kind of speech, each showing that he stood ready to accept some temporary offer.

"The delegates of the National Textile Workers Union took the stand and in an aggressive, militant manner told of the national silk strike. They pledged to carry on the struggle until the demands were won. We openly told the Washington gentlemen, 'We assume responsibility for this strike. We will spread it. We accept no temporary agreements, we are tired of them. When you are ready to give us our demands, we will go back to work.'

"Whiteside and the members of the National Labor Board listened in silence. Not once did he try to interrupt me as he did during the woolen hearing. I wound up by telling him, 'Mr. Whiteside, you and the rest of the Board listen to our speeches today simply because of the national silk strike of 65,000 silk and dye workers. The strike is the workers' only weapon of struggle. We mean to use it until we gain our objective.'

"The worker-delegates from the independent unions followed with similar militant speeches. The hearing lasted past the regular time. It was to have ended at 4 o'clock. At 6 o'clock the chairman passed a note to me asking whether it wasn't possible to end the meeting as everyone was tired. Our delegation held a consultation, and answered that we wanted one more speaker from Allentown. They gladly agreed, and then the meeting was adjourned. A mass delegation in Washington, backed by a national silk strike, surely had an effect on the N.R.A. gentlemen in Washington. They did not dare to brush us aside.

"The next morning all silk manufacturers and delegates involved in the silk strike met with Wagner to discuss the strike itself. Wagner urged both sides to elect a small committee to meet with him.

"McMahon thought he was going to select the labor representatives. But the worker-delegates objected. We intended to have all unions represented.

"Wagner rose and called upon the employers to leave the room and let the labor delegates fight it out among themselves. The employers began to leave the room, except for Max Baker, secretary of the Paterson Manufacturers Association, who chatted with Mc-Mahon for a brief moment before he left.

"Someone nominated McMahon as chairman. He stood up and declared that he refused to officiate at a meeting with anybody not affiliated to the U. T. W. We told him it made no difference what organizations we belonged to, we were in Washington for one purpose and should present one front against the employers. He said, 'Nothing doing,' and called upon his delegates to leave the room. We accused him of splitting the ranks. The U. T. W. delegates left the room.

"We began selecting our representatives for the coming conference. Then Mr. Leicerson, Mr. Wagner's secretary, walked into the

room and asked what happened. We explained the actions of Mc-Mahon. Leicerson then asked, 'Are you people ready to accept a temporary agreement, and send the strikers back to work?' We answered in one voice, 'Hell, no!' 'Then you can't go into any conference,' he stated.

"'Do you mean to tell us that McMahon and the rest of the U. T. W. delegates have already agreed to that arrangement?' we fairly shouted. 'Of course,' he answered, and walked out.

"We saw through the scheme at once. They were planning a secret conference at which to sell out the strike. We went into the hallway, and sure enough, both employers and U. T. W. labor representatives were gone. No one seemed to know where they went. Our various delegations sent wires home warning the strikers of the coming trick; telling them to wire in protests.

"After cornering one N.R.A. official after another, demanding to know where the conference was being held, and getting the same 'I don't know, I swear I don't' for an answer, we decided to go home and prepare to rebuff their game on the strike front.

"It was at this particular secret conference that the infamous 'five-week truce' was cooked up. Having been forewarned, the strikers back home voted down this trick to get them back into the mills on the same rotten conditions. The strike continued, more militantly, with a greater understanding of what unity meant."

The U.T.W. leaders agreed to call off the strike. They agreed to send 70,000 strikers back to work after less than two weeks effective strike under a "five weeks truce" under the cotton code wages. They agreed with the N.R.A. and Deputy Administrator Whiteside, with Senator Wagner and the National Labor Board, with the dye and silk manufacturers' associations to smash the silk and dye strike. Why? Because McMahon, as he stated, did not believe in this or any other strike. Because McMahon, as he himself openly admitted, helped draw up the very slave codes against which 70,000 silk textile workers were in rebellion. Because McMahon and his partners of the U.T.W. are the agents of the textile bosses within the labor movement.

Who were the men who agreed to a "five weeks truce" and an immediate return to work without any concessions? They were enemies of the workers within their ranks. Here they are:

1. Thomas F. McMahon, President of the U. T. W. (A. F. of L.).
2. Francis Gorman, Vice-President of the U. T. W. 3. Frank
Schweitzer, organizer of the Paterson U. T. W. local (Associated
Silk Workers Union), and Secretary-Treasurer of the American
Federation of Silk Workers (A. F. of L.). 4. Morris Treiser, rep-

resentative of the United Warpers League, an independent Paterson craft union (since repudiated by its membership). 5. William F. Kelly, Second Vice-President of the U. T. W. 6. Joseph Brooks, an organizer representing the Paterson U. T. W. local—a follower of the Muste "American Workers Party" group.

(Frank Hicks represented the Paterson Loomfixers Club (independent) but did not agree to the "five-weeks truce" and reported against it to his organization. Later Hicks joined the N.T.W.U.)

The American Federation of Silk Workers (A. F. of L.) strike committee met in Scranton, Pa. One thousand silk strikers attended the meeting. With one voice they voted down the truce. Mass meetings of strikers everywhere denounced it. Completely repudiated, neither McMahon or Gorman dared to show their faces to the strikers. McMahon's little lap dogs, Schweitzer and his Lovestone agents, Keller and Rubinstein, and Muste's man, Brooks, carried out the McMahon policies under the cover of radical phrases. Schweitzer finally bowed before the storm and swore that he didn't have anything to do with the "five-weeks truce" agreement except to agree to report it back to the U.T.W. membership. Whatever the membership would decide that —Schweitzer said—he would carry out. This type of demagogy is often resorted to by A. F. of L. bureaucrats when they are caught redhanded in their sell-out proposals.

Aroused by these brazen attempts to sell out both the dye and silk strikes, the independent unions and the N.T.W.U. decided to find a united front basis for organizing the tremendous sentiment of the strikers for unity.

CHAPTER VIII

The United Front

The 32 delegates, representing the independent unions and the N.T.W.U. at the Washington hearing, met and decided to propose a large silk and dye strike conference to set up a central leadership. The Allentown Silk Workers Union, leading the 6,000 silk strikers of Allentown, endorsed this proposal and issued a call for a conference which met in Allentown on September 17.

The 270 delegates at the conference represented 27,000 silk strikers and elected a United National Silk Strike Committee which combined nine silk workers' unions and many separate shop unions under one leadership. The United National Silk Strike Committee immediately issued an appeal to the A. F. of L. organizations for the formation of one leadership on a united front basis for the conduct of the strike. At all mass meetings held by the United Strike Committee or its affiliated bodies A. F. of L. silk unions were invited to send their speakers. The slogan of the strike committee was "one leadership", one strike committee, one picket line, one settlement. All proposals for settlement to be submitted first to the strikers. Only by a vote of all the strikers, organized and unorganized, was the strike to be settled.

The answer of the A. F. of L. - U. T. W. leaders to all proposals for united action and a united front may be summed up in the reply of Eli Keller, Lovestoneite co-organizer of the Paterson U.T.W. local, who said: "I would rather see this strike in hell than to permit unity with the National Textile Workers' Union." His sentiments represented the line of the whole U.T.W.-A. F. of L.-Lovestone-Socialist-Muste leadership of the strike.

* * * * :

The United National Strike Committee instructed all its affiliated organizations immediately to propose a united front with the U.T.W. locals in each locality; to organize joint, united picket lines; united mass meetings; to establish united-front strike committees in each striking silk mill; and to spread the strike to every mill in each vicinity.

The United Strike Committee further addressed itself to the A. F. of L. national strike committee proposing to set up a joint united set-

tlement committee to deal with the manufacturers and the National Labor Board in all negotiations. The organizations affiliated to the United Strike Committee were urged to establish such united front settlement committees in each locality.

Meetings of the United Strike Committee were held regularly each week at Easton, Allentown and Paterson alternately during the course of the strike. At its second meeting, at Paterson, the strike committee took up the question of spreading the strike to New England and the South. It was decided to send Ann Burlak with a committee of five to Rhode Island to offer the co-operation of the United National Strike Committee to the U.T.W. locals there in bringing the 10,000 silk workers of New England into the general strike.

CHAPTER IX

The Strike Situation in Rhode Island

When the New Jersey-Pennsylvania delegation of silk strikers with Ann Burlak at their head arrived in Pawtucket, R. I., the national silk strike had been in progress for one month.

Not only had nothing been done to enlist the support of the 10,000 New England silk workers for the general strike, but the committee found that all news of the general strike was carefully suppressed both by the local press and the organizers of the U.T.W. The committee reported that over 70,000 silk and dye workers were out for \$36, the 30-hour week, and 2 looms. The silk workers of Pawtucket said that they were told by the U.T.W. that only a few shops in Paterson were on strike and that Paterson was "always striking." The rank and file workers expressed their desire to strike with New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, but they wanted their union (the U.T.W.) to call the strike.

The committee called upon Francis Gorman, of the U.T.W., and offered its co-operation in spreading the strike to Rhode Island and New England silk centers. Mr. Gorman flatly refused, saying, "The United Textile Workers of America has not issued any call for a general silk strike. Locals of the U.T.W. which are now on strike are affiliated to the American Federation of Silk Workers, A. F. of L. Therefore I have no authority to call a strike in Rhode Island. You must see Mr. McMahon in New York City."

The committee asked Gorman, "What about taking up this question with the rank and file silk workers in Rhode Island?" But Gorman refused to take any action.

The committee then went to the local U.T.W. Executive Board and put the strike question up to them. There it was defeated by a narrow margin due to opposition by the U.T.W. officials. It is hardly necessary to comment upon this act of treason and scabbery against the 70,000 striking silk textile workers by the very A. F. of L. union leaders who pretended to lead this strike in other sections.

The committee then issued the leaflet reproduced on the opposite page. On Oct. 12, 1933, over 1,000 Pawtucket-Central Falls silk workers at seven mills struck without waiting for legal sanctions. The Providence News Tribune (Oct. 12, 1933) describes the walkout as follows:

"The executive board had hoped to meet tomorrow with city officials before the strike was called, but without waiting for sanction from labor leaders the workers took the matter in their own hands and left their respective plants."

The U.T.W. executive board in Pawtucket was pursuing a hesitant policy even though it was composed of workers who to a large extent did not trust Gorman. Joseph Hebner, president of the U.T.W. Local 799 (a mill worker himself), was quoted by the Pawtucket Times on Oct. 12, 1933, as saying: "We throw up our hands. This is an impulsive and unauthorized walkout and we assume no responsibility for developments." Gorman was in Washington and was immediately telegraphed to return to Rhode Island. Without waiting for Gorman's arrival the workers put forward the following demands: \$30 minimum for weavers and warpers, 3 looms; \$20 for quillers, winders, inspectors per 60 ends; \$30 for enterers and \$18 for general mill help; 30 hours for all. To let the manufacturers know that they wouldn't stand for Gorman's interference the local leaders declared: "The above demands are being submitted with the understanding that the executive board of Local 799 has full power to deal with the situation." The \$1.85 scale was supposed to net weavers about \$22 to \$24 per week according to the manufacturers, but the workers said that they were only averaging about \$18 to \$19 a week.

Gorman only officially recognized the strike after it was on and could not be immediately "prevented." On Oct. 16 he admitted, according to the Providence *Journal*:

"Four or five weeks ago some of our organizations came to me and said they wanted to go on strike. I asked them not to strike. We even had delegations from Paterson, N. J., and Pennsylvania come here and try to get them out. We had Communists going from house to house trying to make trouble. My argument was that in fairness to the government and employers, by striking we would make a grievous mistake before the silk code was adopted." (My emphasis—J.B.)

By Oct 16 the strikers' ranks had swelled to 2,500. At the height of the strike there were about 3,000 out, involving every important silk mill except the Weypoyset.

Over 65,000 Silk and Dye Workers are now out in a Nationwide Strike. For the first time we have practically tied-up the entire silk industry.

This gives the Rhode Island silk workers a splendid chance to win big increases in wages and to abolish the speed-up system. \$1.85 per 100,000 picks is not enough for silk weavers!

All silk and dye workers of Pennsylvania, New Jersey and parts of New York and Connecticut are now on strike. This strike is still spreading. We are on strike against the miserable manufacturers' codes, and for decent living conditions.

We have today, a truly nation-wide strike. We have the silk dye industry tied up almost 100%. This is the silk workers' opportunity to win decent living conditions and high wages in all mills and all silk centers at one time.

Rhode Island is the only place that is still working.
Brothers: You can win high wages now, by joining in the nation-wide silk and dye strike. Show your solidarity, Let's fight together and win together.

It doesn't make any difference what union you belong to. This is one nation-wide strike for high wages and better conditions. We've got to all stick together and win this strike, We can win this strike.

Get together in your mill. Talk it over. Join the present nationwide silk strike, while everyone else is striking. Build a big rank and file Strike Committee to represent the workers of all Rhode Island silk mills. Then your Strike Committee can send delegates to the United National Strike Committee with headquarters at 414 Gordon Street, Allentown, Pa. and sub-stations at 6 Smith Street, Paterson, N. J.

UNITED NATIONAL STRIKE COMMITTEE Representing:

Allentown Silk Workers Union
Lehigh Valley Ribbon Workers Union
Independent Shop Unions of Lehigh Valley (12 cities)
National Textile Workers Union, New Jersey and Pa.
American Federation of Silk Workers Locals
Independent Silk Workers Union of Scranton and vicinity
Loomfixers Club (Paterson)
United Warpers League
United Twister Club
General Dye Strike Committee of New Jersey and Penna.

Member T.U.L.

On Nov. 19 the Pawtucket executive board of the U.T.W. sent two delegates to Paterson to meet with Schweitzer and try to come to agreement on uniform sectional settlements of the strike. When these U.T.W. delegates (Hebner and Saperstein) came to Paterson and got the report of how the U.T.W. leaders had crippled the national silk strike piecemeal they threw up their hands in disgust. They did not dare to report back the true facts to their rank and file on the theory that it would demoralize them and they would stream back to work.

After the final sell-out settlement in Paterson the Pawtucket-Central Falls strikers were left stranded high and dry, fighting with their backs to the wall. They put up a dogged resistance to about the second week of December and were then finally forced back to the mills.

On Dec. 11 the manufacturers and Gorman offered the strikers a secret ballot on the proposal of \$1.90 per 100,000 picks. We had prepared the members on the executive board against an attempted steal of the vote. As a result precautions were taken and the majority of the strikers voted to reject the \$1.90 proposal. Gorman then accused the local leaders with stuffing the ballot box. He raised the cry that "reds" stuffed the ballot box and another vote was necessary. The fact of the matter was that only union members with U.T.W. cards could vote.

Between the first and second balloting a battle broke out between strikers, scabs and armed deputies in front of the Hamlet Mills, showing the dogged determination of these workers. After the battle one policeman, a state representative and a number of scabs were sent to the hospital. One of the scabs tried to run down a striker, so the strikers swarmed around the car, overturned it and set it on fire.

In the second balloting, although the rank and file won their point to permit all strikers to vote, the ballot boxes were under police supervision and the result announced was that a majority had voted to return. Thus the U.T.W. signed up here for 10c less than Paterson, the same provisions for no more strikes, arbitration, etc. The workers have just gotten a week's forced "vacation" and about half of the workers are not needed in the mills. To a large extent they will be staggered, thus bringing their weekly earnings down to a starvation level. Large numbers of them will get about half the weekly wage that they had before the strike. As a result we can look forward to increased disgust with the U.T.W. leaders, failure to pay dues in the U.T.W., and a move for independent unionism.

Could there be any blacker record of betrayal?

National Labor Board—Government Strike-Breaker

Robert F. Wagner, Senator from New York, in his role of Chairman of the National Labor Board, N.R.A., has shown himself to be a consummate demagogue, and an enemy of the impoverished workers. The very composition of the National Labor Board, with Senator Wagner at its head, should of itself prove to Labor the real intent and purpose of the N.R.A.

At the first public hearing in New York City in September, 1933, before the assembled workers and manufacturers, Senator Wagner proposed that the silk strikers return to work at once and without concessions, leaving mediation in the hands of the board. Ann Burlak, speaking for the strikers, indignantly demanded to know how an impartial chairman could seriously make so insulting a proposal. "Why do you not propose that the manufacturers pay the weavers, say, at least \$27 a week and recognize their unions as a basis for returning to work?" Senator Wagner hypocritically replied that he was thinking of the thousands without their wages and suffering on account of the

The N.R.A., the National Labor Board and their A. F. of L. agents McMahon, Schweitzer, Keller and others, found it impossible to break the unity of the strikers from within. This was demonstrated time and time again in every strike center. In Paterson a huge demonstration was held at the Hinchcliffe Stadium on Monday, October 2, 1933, under the auspices of the Associated local union. Twenty thousand workers and strikers assembled. The members of the N.T.W.U. marched into the Stadium 4,000 strong with a huge banner at their head reading, "A. F. of L. Members, We Greet You." "Unity Will Win the Strike." Mr. Keller, the renegade from Communism, playing the bosses' game, tried to denounce the N.T.W.U. leaders and the United National Strike Committee. The 20,000 workers with one voice booed Keller off the stand and refused to allow him to proceed.

In Allentown, Emaus and Easton, the silk strikers of all unions were united on the picket lines and in all strike actions. The national silk strike was uniting under the leadership of the United Front Strike Committee and the N.T.W.U. and was reaching its most militant

stage. The Rhode Island U.T.W. silk workers were getting ready to strike over the heads of the McMahon-Gorman leadership. The Southern silk workers were stirring as the news of the strike seeped through below the Mason-Dixon line. In this situation the National Labor Board and the N.R.A. authorities threw in all their forces to break the strike. Mr. Moffitt was sent back to Paterson to reopen secret negotiations with the U.T.W. Dyers' Local 1733 and the Dyers' Institute. Negotiations were also begun to get the 3,000 Paterson jacquard weavers back to work. A great ballyhoo was started in the Paterson boss press about "saving the silk industry for Paterson."

While President Roosevelt was preparing to sign the \$12-\$13 silk code, Mr. Whiteside, N.R.A. Deputy Administrator, hurriedly called a new hearing on the cotton code in Washington, D. C., for October 9. Three hundred silk and dye strikers attended this hearing from Scranton, Wilkesbarre, Paterson, New York and other centers. They marched through the streets of Washington shouting, "We will write our codes on the picket lines." They denounced the cotton and silk codes and expressed their determination to strike until they forced the N.R.A. and the bosses to accept their demands.

At the same time Senator Wagner called the National Labor Board to meet in New York City, Tuesday, October 10. Again the strikers sent their mass delegations to New York from all strike centers. The silk manufacturers came in hundreds to this meeting. The U.T.W. hired the "Socialist" lawyer, Judge Jacob Panken, to speak for them. John J. Ballam exposed the strike-breaking maneuvers of Senator Wagner and the N.R.A., reiterating that the strike demands and the participation of all the strikers' organizations in all negotiations were the only basis for settlement. After the almost obscene display of demagogy and team work between the "Socialist" Panken and Wagner, Panken finally accepted Wagner's proposals for a separate settlement of both the dye strike and the jacquard weavers' strike.

Encouraged by the open preparations for betrayal of the strike by the N.R.A. and the A. F. of L., the bosses at this hearing offered \$2 per 100,000 picks and four looms (\$20 a week) for weavers, as against the strikers' demand for \$36 a week and two looms. This "offer" was indignantly rejected by the strikers. Although the United Front Strike Committee had succeeded in getting a representative (Bodihas, President of the Allentown Silk Workers Union) on the committee of this conference, Wagner secretly arranged with the A. F. of L. to shut Bodihas out of further conferences with the bosses.

The boss press announced that an agreement had been reached between the U.T.W. dyers' union committee and the Dye Institute, and at the same time the National Labor Board announced from Washington that the silk bosses had agreed to pay \$27 a week to weavers and proportional increases for other crafts. Schweitzer and Keller rushed back from Washington and got 1,500 Paterson weavers to vote to accept \$27 a week and return to work. When this vote was announced the silk manufacturers, meeting separately, denied that they had made any such agreement with the National Labor Board, or the A. F. of L.

The confusion deliberately created by the trickery of the National Labor Board and the A. F. of L. began to work. The strike front cracked under the strain and the Emaus, Pa., shop unions, involving 2,000, returned to work. On October 12 President Roosevelt signed the infamous silk code and General Johnson stated that these codes would be reopened only over his dead body.

CHAPTER XI

Breaking the Strike Front

The Lehigh Valley Ribbon Workers Union of Allentown, Pa., and the Allentown Silk Workers Union had succeeded in pulling every silk mill in that vicinity. These ribbon weavers were the backbone of the Allentown section. But they were being cut to pieces by the A. F. of L. organization, whose leaders would rather see the strike lost entirely than won under these two militant unions. In Paterson, the ribbon shops were never called out on strike. Ribbon shops were sent back by the U.T.W. whenever they tried to join the strike. McMahon declared the strike in Stroudsburg, Pa., an "outlaw strike" and ordered these workers back to work.

In Wilkes-Barre, Scranton and vicinity 12,000 silk workers were led in the strike by an independent union, the Pennsylvania Federation of Silk Workers, under the direction of John Parks. The A. F. of L. immediately denounced Parks as a "Red" and stated that they would have nothing to do with the Wilkes-Barre strikers as long as Parks was their leader. Not wishing to stand in the way of unity, Parks withdrew after a struggle. Mr. Brooks, a Musteite, was sent to Wilkes-Barre by the A. F. of L. Strike Committee. After an attack by the police and the arrest of a number of strikers, Brooks advised the strikers to abandon the mass picket lines, and soon after this left town. The A. F. of L. leaders disrupted the independent union and abandoned the Wilkes-Barre and Scranton strikers, who drifted back to work unorganized and defeated.

The A. F. of L. leaders pulled 3,000 throwsters, mostly girls, out on strike in Paterson while they paid no attention to the main Pennsylvania throwing centers, employing 45,000 throwsters, sending them back to work in those places where they attempted to join the strike. Later, the 3,000 throwsters of Paterson, who were on strike for 12 weeks were completely ignored and abandoned by the Schweitzers and Kellers when they finally sold out the Paterson sector. It has already been described how the Rhode Island silk strikers broke away from the U. T. W. Gorman leadership and how they were finally betrayed, abandoned and defeated.

On October 14, the U. T. W. dyers local 1733 announced that it

had reached an agreement to settle the strike of 15,000 Paterson dye workers. The bosses this time agreed to pay 57½ c an hour or \$23 for a 40 hour week. This represented a 28 per cent increase in wages. They agreed to deal only with locals 1733 and 1932 of the U. T. W., ignoring the 3,000 members of the N. T. W. U. which organized and led the strike. There was no provision for the abolition of the split shift, or for minimum working hours or a wage guarantee. When the agreement was submitted to the members of the A. F. of L. union at their membership meeting, October 15, it was unanimously rejected. The membership demanded recognition of the N.T.W.U. also; more wages, no split shifts. Besides, the dye workers did not want to abandon the silk strikers.

The U.T.W. members sent their local president, Mr. Vigoritto and a committee to negotiate with the N.T.W.U. for joint action. Meanwhile Jack Rubenstein was urging the dye strikers to have nothing to do with the Communists and the N.T.W.U. He succeeded in getting the executive board of the U.T.W. dyers local to vote down the N.T.W.U. proposals for a continuation of the dye strike together with this silk strike to a victorious end through united action and joint settlement. But the rank and file strikers sent for Ann Burlak and Moe Brown, who presented the N.T.W.U. proposals to 3,000 U.T.W. members in their own headquarters at Turn Hall, while 2,000 strikers waited outside.

Alarmed at the turn events were taking, the A. F. of L. leaders decided to take a secret ballot to end the dye strike. They also sent some printers and engravers back to work at the National Piece Dye Works in East Paterson, which had been closed down tight since September 11.

The Blood Bath

Encouraged by their A. F. of L. agents inside the ranks of the dye strikers, the dye bosses now prepared to smash the spirit of the strikers. The N.T.W.U. announced and widely distributed a call for the immediate organization of one united union of all dye workers to bring together under rank and file leadership all members of the N.T.W.U., the A. F. of L., and the unorganized, for the permanent cementing of the dye workers' united front.

On Friday morning, October 20, a joint picket line of 500 N.T. W.U. and A. F. of L. members marched to the National Piece Dye Workers in East Paterson to take out the scabs sent in by the U.T.W.

local leaders. The line was allowed to approach close to the mill, when 50 police and gunmen suddenly opened fire on the unarmed pickets. Tear gas bombs were thrown into their midst. Before the picket line broke 13 workers lay wounded on the ground, two of them critically.

On Monday, October 23, the A. F. of L. leaders announced that a majority of their members had voted to return to work and called off the dye strike. On Tuesday morning the dye workers appearing before their plants faced the entire Paterson police force and fire department. Sand bags were thrown up in the streets before the dye houses. Armed guards, gunmen and deputy sheriffs patrolled each gate. An A. F. of L. speaker, protected by these armed guards, harangued the strikers at each mill gate, urging the dye workers to return to work peacefully. Under this pressure the lines broke. In knots of tens and twenties these fighting strikers dejectedly went back to their dye boxes and machines.

At the Weidman plant, in spite of armed force, intimidation and the appeal of one A. F. of L. worker who became known throughout Paterson as "Joe, the Rat," the strikers kept their picket formation. They marched to the N.T.W.U. strike headquarters at 612 River Street. Scouts brought in reports that the lines were breaking everywhere. The strike was over—sold out, betrayed. Some wanted to fight on. Tears rolled down the cheeks of strong men. One thousand strikers elected a committee with Moe Brown and Herbert Snell at their head. They saw Supt. Murphy of the United Piece Dye Works. On the basis of no discrimination against anyone for strike activities; the right to belong to the N.T.W.U.; recognition of the shop committee elected by the workers; etc., the Weidman local of the N.T. W.U. marched in to work on Wednesday morning. Two thousand members of the N.T.W.U. unanimously adopted the following declaration on the A. F. of L. sell out:

"We Were Not Defeated!

We Were Betrayed!

"STATEMENT OF PATERSON DYE STRIKERS

"We, the mass meeting of Paterson Dye Strikers assembled at General Dye Strike Headquarters at 612 River Street on Tuesday, Oct. 24, 1933, adopt the following resolution unanimously as proposed by the General Dye Strike Committee of the National Textile Workers Union.

"The General Dye Strike has been stabbed in the back!

"Fifteen thousand silk dye workers have been betrayed and sent back to work, when victory was within their grasp.

"All dye workers will place full responsibility for this betrayal upon the leaders of the U.T.W. These leaders have proven themselves to be agents of the employers and unworthy of the confidence of any decent worker.

"These U. T. W. leaders, at a time when the overwhelming majority of the dyers proved they were determined to stay on strike for victory, faked a 'secret ballot' which they themselves controlled and stampeded the workers back to work. They broke the backbone of the strike.

"In face of this betrayal, we have no other course left except that of deciding to go back to work on Wednesday, Oct. 25, with our spirit high. We are determined to keep and build our organization in the mill, prevent discrimination against any striker and prepare for the struggles to come.

"We will continue to support the broad silk strikers. But we warn the broad silk strikers against the leadership of the Associated Silk Workers Union. They are the same people that betrayed us and broke our strike. We urge the silk workers to build a united front strike committee and kick out the Schweitzers, Kellers, Rubensteins from the leadership.

"We will increase our efforts to unite the N.T.W.U., the U.T.W. members and the unorganized into one powerful union of all dye workers of Paterson and vicinity.

"We extend our thanks to the honest fighting leadership of the N.T.W.U., which fought against every betrayal and tried their best to help us win the strike.

"We extend our fraternal greetings to the rank and file members of the U. T. W. dye workers who were betrayed together with us.

"The strengthening of the N.T.W.U. in the dye plants will be the best way to lay the foundation of one dye workers' union.

"We are not defeated. We could have won our strike if all dye strikers had followed the leadership of the National Textile Workers Union. We know who are our friends and who are our enemies. The small gains we won are due to the militant battles of the rank and file dye strikers and the leadership of the National Textile Workers Union.

"Issued by General Dye Strike Committee of the National Textile Workers Union."

CHAPTER XII

Breaking the Strike Front (Continued)

The day after the dye strike was broken the boss press announced that 3,000 jacquard workers had been sent back to work by the A. F. of L. local under an agreement calling for from \$25 to \$30 a week. (Jacquard weavers are highly skilled workers. But their work is seasonal. Under this scale of prices they would not average \$8 a week during the course of a year.) This further abandonment of the strike front, following the dyers' retreat, so incensed the remaining Paterson silk strikers that they began picketing the jacquard shops to try to pull them out again. U.T.W. members with union cards in their pockets now were being led by A. F. of L. officials to picket silk mills settled by the A. F. of L. Union men were fighting union men in Paterson.

A little later on the leaders of the Horizontal Warpers local of the U.T.W. sent some of their men in to work in two large plants making warps for scab weavers. Again the U.T.W. picket lines marched against the U.T.W. scabs. Both the union strikers and the "union" scabs were good-standing members of the same A. F. of L. union and both were under the same U.T.W. leadership. But the jacquard workers and the warpers remained at work. Out of 27,000 silk and dye strikers only 9,000 broad silk workers remained doggedly on strike in Paterson.

The strike-breaking alliance between the N.R.A., the U. S. Department of Labor, the National Labor Board, President Roosevelt, and the A. F. of L. officials (including the Lovestone renegades, Keller and Rubenstein and their allies of the Socialist Party) was taking effect, but the great silk strike was not yet broken. Fully 30,000 broad silk workers were still out, fighting with their backs to the wall. They knew that, under the circumstances, they could not win their full demands. But they realized that unless they fought on, conditions would be worse in the mills than before they struck.

The 6,000 Allentown silk strikers attempted to save the local situation. The Allentown Silk Workers Union tried to open negotiations with their local employers. The leaders of the small U.T.W. local in Allentown effectually blocked joint negotiations on the principle that

they would rather see the workers completely defeated than to have an independent "Red" union settle the strike. The strategy of the N.R.A., through its National Labor Board, during the whole course of the strike was to prevent the strikers from forming any real fighting organization. Whenever the strikers sought to settle the strike through any other union than the A. F. of L., there the National Labor Board threw in its forces to prevent a settlement. Their aim was to keep the workers divided and helpless.

The National Labor Board, the manufacturers and their A. F. of L. lieutenants made one more effort to completely smash the broad silk strike. The National Labor Board, after meeting with the U.T.W. leaders and the manufacturers, made its final decision on the strike November 2 at Washington. Stripped of its verbiage this decision contained four main points:

- 1. The silk strike shall be called off and all strikers return to work.
- 2. Weavers shall receive piece rates to yield average wages of \$25 a week.
- 3. The N.R.A. to investigate wage differentials in the silk textile industry to prevent unfair competition.
- 4. All provisions of the N.R.A. silk and cotton codes to remain in effect.

The bosses' press immediately came out with two-inch headlines, "Silk Strike Outlawed by Labor Board Edict." The U.T.W. leaders hailed this decision of the National Labor Board as a victory. The only thing needed to make it complete, they said, was the recognition of the U.T.W.! The socialist Judge Panken urged the U.T.W. strike committee to accept the National Labor Board decision, which they did.

But the United Front Strike Committee and the N.T.W.U. still urged the strikers to stand firm; to organize joint united settlement committees in each locality; to demand recognition of shop committees in each mill; to open up regional negotiations directly with the employers of each section on strike; to demand a minimum for weavers of 6c a yard of 64 picks (equal to \$27 a 40-hour week on four looms); proportional increases for all crafts; \$18 minimum wages for lowest paid labor; enforcement of the provisions of the Workers' Textile Code.

Responding to this call the silk strikers rallied, manned the picket lines, and kept the mills shut down in every silk center still on strike. Under the leadership of the N.T.W.U. the strikers demanded negotiations and settlement on the basis of their demands first, and the calling off of the strike only by a vote of all the strikers involved.

The manufacturers took the position that the strikers must return to work first and then wait until the N.R.A. had completed its investigation of wage differentials in the silk industry. It would be determined later whether the National Labor Board's decision was a fair rate or not. The bosses flatly refused to pay first and talk afterwards. They were certain that the strike would be broken, and everywhere, outside of Paterson, they made every attempt to open their mills.

Supporting this stand of the bosses, Francis Gorman, Vice-President of the U.T.W., issued a statement saying that only two courses were open to the silk strikers: 1. Stay out on strike until the N.R.A. completes the investigation of wage differentials "to the satisfaction of the employers," or, 2. Go back to work now and wait until the N.R.A. finally decides the question of wages.

The Sell-Out in Allentown

In Allentown the independent Allentown Silk Workers Union, together with the Ribbon Weavers Union, had through their militancy and mass picketing forced the Mayor to order every mill to remain closed. After Roosevelt signed the silk code the Mayor of Allentown withdrew this order and, giving unlimited police protection to the mill owners, ordered no more than from ten to fifteen pickets at any one mill. The strikers defied this regulation for a few days and many collisions with the police took place, resulting in the clubbing, gassing and arrests of the pickets. The U.T.W. local leaders (Macri, Miller, Case) thereupon expressed their confidence in the Mayor and called off their pickets. As a result of this break in the united picket lines, over 1,000 scabs had entered the mills. Due to the breaking of the dye strike, the return of the jacquard shops, the return of the Emaus strikers, the sell-out policies of the A. F. of L., and the opening of negotiations by the Allentown ribbon workers, the shop unions of a number of mills in Allentown voted to return to work. In some shops strikers returned without any gains.

On October 27 the Allentown Silk Workers Union called a mass meeting at which, after a defeatist report, the workers decided to return to the mills with whatever gains they could get, maintaining their organization. In some mills the bosses had offered a 25 per cent increase and recognition of the independent union, and their leaders felt that they could not hold these mills out on strike any longer. In taking this action the leadership of the independent union made a serious blunder, even though the workers approved of this action.

Fearing that the discredited U.T.W. leadership would be ousted and useless for further strike-breaking activities, the National Labor Board sent one of its members, Sidney Hillman, to Allentown. Three thousand workers gathered to hear Hillman speak. The American Federation of Silk Workers, A. F. of L., reports Hillman's remarks as follows:

He said that Senator Wagner had issued summonses to the manufacturers of Allentown to appear in Washington on Tuesday and at that time these manufacturers would be told officially what the United States Government expects them to do in the settlement of the strike.

Mr. Hillman said further that he had talked with Senator Wagner and that the Senator had said that the manufacturers of Allentown and other places of Pennsylvania were not co-operating with the government and that by holding off they had placed them in the position of acting against the United States Government.

Mr. Hillman said further that the power of Washington was behind the recommendation of the National Labor Board for the workers to accept the \$25 per week for weavers offered by the Paterson manufacturers. (The Paterson bosses never made such an offer—J.J.B.) It was not enough for skilled weavers, he held, but told the chairmen that it ought to be accepted locally until such time as it is made possible for the whole industry to pay more.

General Johnson, Mr. Hillman said, is supporting Senator Wagner in trying to have this proposal made by the manufacturers to their workers in Pennsylvania and other centers outside of Paterson.

"If the workers go back to work before next Tuesday," said Mr. Hillman, "then the National Labor Board will be unable to help them. The Board can only act where there is a strike. It is quite necessary that the workers hold their ranks until at least next week. There is no question in my mind that this is an opportunity for you to lay a foundation for a strong organization in the silk industry which will ultimately lay down the conditions of work not only in this city but in the entire industry.

"I think that the city administration owes it to itself, to the people of this city and to the United States Government, to help you win this fight. If wages are low in industry there is not a chance for real recovery in this country, not a chance. Only if men and women will make sufficient wages and spend it in the stores will it be accomplished.

"I firmly believe that if you Allentown workers hold out for a few days more, you will be able to win a settlement on the basis of recognition of your union and a reasonable wage. If the manufacturers of Paterson can afford to pay their workers \$25 a week, so can your employers.

"I again urge you to hold your ranks until the hearing in Washington on Tuesday. I can assure you that we will give you all the support that we can and then we'll see whether your employers in Allentown are big enough to defy the United States Government. I tell you that they are not big enough to defy the United States Government and they will be told so.

"Of course, as I said before, there will be nothing for the National Labor Board to do unless the workers stay out on strike. I therefore urge you that between now and Monday, make every effort to hold your ranks.

"I know that workers are not going back to the mills of their own free will. They are hungry and cold. But if you continue making the sacrifice for another week and build a solid organization, you will be proud of that sacrifice."

> (Signed) AMERICAN FEDERATION OF SILK WORKERS, AFFILIATED WITH A. F. OF L.

Following Hillman's speech the strike in Allentown took on new life. A few days later came the final decision of the National Labor Board ordering the strikers to return to work; \$25 a week, etc. The U.T.W. leaders here hailed it as a victory as they did elsewhere. The strikers voted to accept the National Labor Board decision upon the advice of Sam Macri, President of the Allentown A. F. of L. local. On November 5 the A. F. of L. local called a mass meeting at which Macri advised the workers to return to work on the terms of the decision of the National Labor Board. The leaders of the independent union (Frank Ernst and Bodihas) opposed this and the strikers voted to stay out until \$25 a week had been guaranteed.

In spite of this vote, Sam Macri issued the following statement to the Allentown press, calling off the strike:

(From Allentown Morning Call, Monday, Nov. 6, 1933)
RETURN OF SILK STRIKERS TO JOBS TUESDAY MORNING
ADVISED BY ASSOCIATED FEDERATION OF SILK WORKERS
(A. F. OF L.) LEADERS

Allentown's striking silk workers who are members of the American Federation of Silk Workers will today be advised to return to their jobs Tuesday morning. This decision was reached last night by the leaders and was arrived at as a means of placing the manufacturers in a position where they have to make known their attitude on the National Labor Board ruling establishing an average weekly wage of \$25 for weavers, and proportionate wages for other workers in the industry. . . .

Sam Macri, President of the local branch of the Federation, pointed out last night that when the silk workers on Friday of last week voted to accept the Labor Board ruling, one of the provisions was that the strike be called off.

Meantime, however, many of the workers felt that the manufacturers should announce their stand before they return to the mills. Yesterday Mr. Macri bluntly put the proposal of returning to work today, but the workers turned this down in favor of the proposition to send shop committees to employers.

"The workers accepted the proposal," Mr. Macri said. "I doubt whether we can find out what the manufacturers will do until they get their mills operating. We now toss the 'hot potato' into the laps of the manufacturers."

He explained that by returning to work the silk people will be forced to show their hand. "If they do not meet the provisions of the Labor Board ruling for the first pay period we then have a case to present to the government. . . .

"When we accepted the Labor Board ruling we got with this action the favorable opinion of the people of our community," Mr. Macri said. "The next step will rest with the manufacturers and if they challenge the authority of the ruling, the government will then have the fight on its own hands. The workers have done their part.

"The silk workers in the walkout wanted to know what the manufacturers are going to do. We are unable to get a conference with them. So the only way left for us is to return to work as a test of the good faith of the manufacturers."

At the meeting yesterday afternoon, F. A. Bodihas, President of the Allentown Silk Workers Union, urged the workers to remain away from the plants.

The statement of the Allentown Silk Workers Union appeared at the same time in the same paper and read as follows:

(From Allentown Morning Call, Nov. 6, 1933)

DISAPPROVES OF RETURN TUESDAY OF SILK STRIKERS

Allentown Silk Workers Union Secretary for Conference With Other Centers

Frank Ernst, secretary of the Allentown Silk Workers Union, following the mass meeting of all silk workers in the Allentown area in the Trainmen's Hall on Sunday afternoon, last night expressed the opinion that before the workers return to work there should be a united conference of workers in the silk centers of Paterson, Easton and Allentown.

"At the mass meeting held today (Sunday)," he said, "the silk

workers of Allentown decided that it was necessary to continue and strengthen the strike.

"This decision was made when it was learned through reports submitted at the mass meeting that the manufacturers did not accept a \$25 average wage proposal for weavers.

"It was the consensus of opinion of those who attended the meeting, and it is also my conviction, that such a decision is a correct one to make at this time. The strikers have shown their willingness to go back to work for a \$25 average wage for weavers.

"The manufacturers refuse to agree to a \$25 average wage, entirely without comment. Therefore, I feel that now the responsibility for the continuation of the strike rests entirely with the manufacturers.

"The Allentown silk workers must hold out until the manufacturers here, as well as elsewhere, accept the \$25 average wage.

"Furthermore, it would be wrong to go back without having reached an understanding to this effect in Paterson, Easton and other sections where the strike is still in progress.

"For this purpose I believe a conference should be called on a united front basis of all the unions and sections involved in the strike.

"It is my suggestion that committees be sent to the manufacturers tomorrow (Monday) and that they demand an answer from them. And let us consult with Paterson in order to not make the same mistake that was made two years ago."

But the Allentown Silk Workers Union was helpless to keep the workers out as they flocked back to work on Tuesday, November 7. They are still waiting for the National Labor Board to make the mill owners pay \$25 a week to the Allentown silk weavers!

These Allentown silk workers realize through bitter experience that the N.R.A. is designed to keep them in slavery and to help the bosses at the workers' expense, and that the "New Deal" is a raw deal of government strike-breaking with the aid of the A. F. of L. bureaucrats.

In Easton, Pa., the 3,000 silk textile workers were under the leader-ship of the N.T.W.U. and the United Front Strike Committee. Here, due to the determination of the strikers to maintain their ranks, the strike was conducted militantly to the end. Here the retreat was orderly, shop by shop. Some slight gains were made. But in all cases the workers won recognition of their shop committees or of the N.T.W.U. The N.T.W.U. local is growing and has nearly 1,000 members mobilized to participate in coming struggles. In Easton the same splitting tactics were used by the A. F. of L. leaders to divide the strikers as in every other center.

The Paterson No-Strike Agreement

With the breaking of the strike in Allentown the whole Pennsylvania and New York sectors collapsed and left the Paterson broad

silk workers and throwsters fighting on alone.

The N.T.W.U. continued to issue appeals to the strikers of Paterson to form one rank and file settlement committee and open negotiations directly with the Paterson Manufacturers Association. The demagogy of the Schweitzers and Kellers still led the silk workers to believe that something could yet be gained and that any rank and file action would jeopardize their chances for a settlement. The next weeks after the National Labor Board decision the situation in the Paterson sector developed into a lock-out.

A Mayor's Chamber of Commerce committee was set up. Conferences were held around November 16. The bosses offered weavers \$1.85 for 100,000 picks, or \$18 a week. This was rejected. A new committee was' set up with the owner of a local bosses' paper at its head. Negotiations were continued until at last the bosses offered \$2 for 100,000 picks, or 4½ cents a yard, 64 pick goods—equalling \$20 a week. But this wage scale was attached to an agreement which the

U.T.W. leaders signed.

This agreement ties the Paterson silk workers up hand and foot to the bosses. It abrogates the right to strike and submits all grievances to an Industrial Relations Board which is to decide if and when the Paterson silk workers may join a national silk strike in the future. The agreement provides for recognition of the U.T.W. union but does not give them the closed shop. It provides for a revision of wages by the Industrial Relations Board every sixty days on the basis of wage scales paid in silk mills outside of Paterson. This agreement was read to the U.T.W. members at a packed meeting. No discussion was permitted. It was then submitted to a vote by secret ballot. It was declared adopted on December 2, although the vote was never made public.

On December 4, 1933, the Paterson silk workers returned to their looms after fourteen weeks on strike. With the return of the Paterson and Rhode Island workers the great national silk strike was ended.

This Paterson agreement between the Silk Manufacturers Association and the U.T.W. union contains the following provisions.

"Article 13—This schedule of minimum wages shall be subject to revision sixty days after the date of this agreement, and every sixty days thereafter, by the Industrial Relations Board. This Board shall consist of seven members, three to be named by the union and three by the Association, the chairman to be named by these six. Wages and rates promulgated by the Board shall be binding upon the parties with the same force and effect as if they had been agreed upon in this agreement."

"Article 15—During the term of this agreement there shall be no strikes or lock-outs. In the event that there is a general strike in the silk and rayon industry as a national strike movement affecting this industry, the union may declare a strike, not, however, until the Board bas ruled that there is a general strike in the industry. By a general national strike is meant a strike in which over 50 per cent of the looms in the industry exclusive of those affected by this agreement have been stopped through a strike." (My emphasis—J.J.B.)

"Article 24—All disputes arising out of this agreement shall be submitted for settlement or determination to the Industrial Relations Board, whose ruling shall be conclusive and binding on both parties."

Every worker will understand the purpose and intent of this agreement but no honest worker will understand how a bona fide trade union could have signed such an agreement.

The Lovestone so-called "Communist Party Opposition" in its official organ, *The Workers Age*, on December 15 hailed this agreement as a victory for the workers. Their only criticism was that it did not sufficiently tie the workers up to the bosses through an A. F. of L. check off and closed shop.

* * * * *

The National Textile Workers Union upon the ending of the strike issued the following statement adopted by the membership of the Paterson district:

The membership of the National Textile Workers Union at its regular meeting held December 1, 1933, unanimously rejected all sections of the agreement which deprive the silk workers of the right to strike and also each and every clause of this agreement which establishes the "Industrial Relations Board" and defines its functions.

Although the National Textile Workers Union has no faith or trust that the textile workers can hope to win through the National Labor Advisory Board of the N.R.A. and its decision for a piece rate base for weavers' wages equaling \$25 a week and proportional increases for all other crafts, the National Textile Workers Union will do everything in its power to fight for such piece rate and proportional increases for all other crafts. At present, the National Textile Workers Union accepts as a basis for settlement the present wage schedule as contained in the agreement.

Direct Agreements of Shop Committees

On the question of the return to work, the membership meeting of the National Textile Workers Union decided as follows:

- 1. That in all those shops where 75 per cent of the workers or more belong to the National Textile Workers Union, these workers, through their shop committees, shall enter into direct agreement with their employers on the basis of the wage scale contained in the agreement as a minimum; recognition of the shop committee and/or of the National Textile Workers Union.
- 2. Members of the National Textile Workers Union have the right to work in all shops where they were employed before the strike and shall not forfeit this right under the agreement. No member of the National Textile Workers Union shall be forced to give up his or her card. All new workers shall have the right to belong to the union of their choice.

No Discrimination

- 3. The National Textile Workers Union will not send its members to work in any shop where a majority of the workers belonging to the United Textile Workers Union (Associated) remains on strike either because the employer refuses to sign the agreement or for other reasons affecting adversely the interests of all the workers of that shop.
- 4. Two-thirds of the broad silk workers of Paterson are unorganized. Therefore, every worker who came out on strike shall have the right to his or her job. No worker shall be prevented from returning to work in any shop where the employer agrees to pay the scale of wages called for in the agreement. The question of organization may be taken up with these unorganized workers only after they return to work.
- 5. In order to provide the necessary machinery for a general settlement of the strike and to protect the interests of all the silk workers in every shop after the strike, the National Textile Workers Union

calls for the free, open and democratic election of a shop committee in each shop, whether organized or unorganized.

No worker in a shop shall be barred from serving on such a shop committee because of his or her particular union affiliation or because of the failure to join any existing union. In larger shops representation should be by departments. All workers by virtue of their being employed in the shop shall have the right to nominate and vote for candidates to the shop committee.

Shop Delegates Council

6. In order to unite all shops, all unions and the unorganized on a city-wide scale, the National Textile Workers Union proposes that a Paterson Silk and Dye Workers' Shop Delegates Council be set up. Each silk mill and dye house to elect delegates from their shop committees or from departments.

The Paterson Shop Delegates Council would thus link up all crafts and every mill into one unbreakable united body in a silk and dye workers' congress capable of uniting the rank and file silk and dye workers through their own elected rank and file delegates.

Call for Unity

- 7. The National Textile Workers Union calls for unity of all silk and dye workers by building one powerful fighting union in the silk textile industry based upon the class struggle and the broadest form of democratic rank and file control. We are convinced that only upon the basis of this program can we improve our working conditions and raise wages.
- 8. The National Textile Workers Union calls for the building of a Silk and Dye Workers' Unemployed Council to fight for adequate relief (food, rent, fuel, clothing, light) to be provided by the city, state and/or Federal Government and the employers. Wages must not be reduced in the shops to the point of starvation by the "share the work" clauses of the agreement. The employed silk dye workers must protect their wages by uniting with the employed in common struggle for their demands.

EXECUTIVE BOARD AND STRIKE COMMITTEE, NATIONAL TEXTILE WORKERS UNION.

The U.T.W. a Company Union

The agreement signed on November 22, 1933, between Local 2505, United Textile Workers, A. F. of L., and the textile and dye bosses of Union City, N. J., is one of the most outrageous in the history of the labor movement. We are quoting three clauses of this agree-

ment definitely depriving the workers of all rights. The employer is the arbiter of the workers' rights and organization.

"This Agreement, made this day of November 22, 1933, between the party of the first part hereafter called the employers, and Local Union No. 2502, United Textile Workers of America, affiliate of the American Federation of Labor, having its principal office and place of business in the city of Union City, New Jersey, party of the second part. The parties do agree as follows:

"Article 2—The employer shall carry on normal relations with the union through the accredited shop committee of the same and adjust as far as possible all grievances through the shop committee after working hours. Said Shop Committee shall be chosen through shop meetings subject to the approval of both the union and the employer. No employee can serve on the shop committee unless he shows six months' continual service in the shop.

"Article 11—During the slack season, the laying off of help shall be decided by the employers, but in case of dispute the laid-off employee can take the matter up with the union or its representative for adjustment. (How kind!—J.J.B.)

"Article 13—In the event strikes are called in other sections during the terms of this contract, it is agreed between the signatories of this contract that no action shall be taken whatsoever." (My emphasis—J.J.B.)

Is it any wonder that the bosses and the N.R.A. support and encourage the building of the U.T.W. as against the independent and T.U.U.L. class struggle unions? The Trade Union Unity League is correct when it places as the primary condition for the success of workers' struggles the defeat of these A. F. of L. labor bureaucrats and their lackeys, the Musteites, Lovestoneites, and the Socialist Party leaders.

CHAPTER XIV

The Next Steps

What were the lessons of this strike?

What mistakes did the N.T.W.U. make in carrying out their program?

First, the N.T.W.U. underestimated the mood and readiness of the silk textile workers for struggle. This was due to isolation from the masses and failure to make sufficient contacts with workers in the shops. Thus, when the strike started it found the N.T.W.U. unprepared to take independent leadership. The belief that the A. F. of L. leaders would not call the strike was a fatal initial mistake, for these A. F. of L. bureaucrats will seek to lead struggles where they cannot be avoided and place themselves at the head of strikes in order to betray them.

Next, the N.T.W.U. lacked confidence in the workers' ability to see through the fake and sham of the N.R.A. and in the vitality of the class struggle. There was a tendency to let the A. F. of L. leaders "hang themselves." In other words, to let the workers learn through their own experiences without giving them the necessary leadership.

While the united front policies of the N.T.W.U. were correctly applied, they were not carried through with sufficient energy and persistence. The putting forward of correct slogans was not of itself enough. With a few exceptions these policies were not crystalized locally into organizational forms of the united front. This was illustrated in the last days of the dye strike when the N.T.W.U. leaders, speaking at Turn Hall to thousands of A. F. of L. members, failed to organize even a committee of these workers to carry out the program of the united front and oust the traitorous A. F. of L. leadership.

But most important of all was the almost complete neglect of the workers inside the A. F. of L. ranks. The N.T.W.U. had no program for work within the A. F. of L. unions. The failure to mobilize effectively the strikers against the sell-out policies of the U.T.W. was mainly due to the failure to build an effective opposition within the U.T.W. itself. Here the McMahons, Schweitzers and Kellers were given practically a free hand. Thousands of new workers were join-

ing the A. F. of L. (6,000 silk workers joined the U.T.W. during the strike in Paterson alone). These formerly unorganized workers were allowed to come under the influence of the Socialist, Lovestone, and A. F. of L. demagogues.

It was possible for the N.T.W.U. to stiffen the resistance of the strikers and imbue them with an iron purpose. It was possible for the N.T.W.U. to win gains of from 15 per cent to 35 per cent wage increases in the strike by defeating the earlier attempts to sell out the strike. It was possible for the N.T.W.U., through its activities and slogans, to maintain some form of organization through shop committees after the strike. For where the N.T.W.U. was active in the strike, where some form of the united front was effective, there the workers were able to continue the strike and maintain their ranks intact when they returned to work, as in Paterson, N. J., and Easton, Pa.

All this was possible, working almost entirely outside the ranks of the A. F. of L. But if the N.T.W.U. and the opposition groups within the A. F. of L. were working together for a common program, then both the bosses and their agents in the A. F. of L. could have been defeated and the strike led to a real victory and a powerful, mass, industrial union of all silk, rayon and dye workers could have been formed.

* * * * *

The workers are beginning to learn these lessons. The increase in the cost of living; the further reduction of the purchasing power of the dollar; the further fascization of the government under the N.R.A.; the tendency of the minimum wages of the textile codes to become the maximum wages; the extension of the speed-up and stretch-out systems; the increasing curtailment of production; the open militarization of labor in preparation for imperialist war; the increasing misery of the unemployed and the stopping of all relief and C.W.A. jobs; the deepening of the crisis generally and the disillusionment of the workers with the Roosevelt "New Deal"; all make for a perspective of immediate mass struggle for the right to live and for the workers' way—the revolutionary way—out of the crisis.

Already in the New York local of the U.T.W. the 600 members have defeated the Lovestone demagogue, Herman, and elected Comrade Belinsky as secretary of the union. In Paterson a left wing opposition group, organized inside the U.T.W. local and on the basis of a left wing program, is challenging the Schweitzer-Keller clique. The Paterson silk workers are making the infamous no-strike agreement a

dead letter by electing their own shop committees in the mills and forcing their bosses to settle grievances directly with the workers, thus

ignoring the Industrial Relations Board.

In its latest attempt to keep the silk workers divided the McMahon bureaucracy has called a conference of all U.T.W. locals in the silk industry to form a federation of silk workers within the A. F. of L.-U.T.W. union. The Paterson opposition group drew up and adopted the following resolution to be presented at the conference. The resolution speaks for itself and forms the basis of their program. We urge all locals of the U.T.W. to adopt this resolution and prepare to organize a real silk and dye workers' mass conference to perfect the unity of all workers in the silk textile industry in preparation for a 100 per cent militant strike to abolish the slave code and for adequate demands in the near future.

RESOLUTION ON THE UNITY OF ALL SILK WORKERS AND FOR THE FORMATION OF ONE SILK WORKERS' UNION

WHEREAS: The chief immediate need of all silk and rayon workers is the unity of all existing unions, all crafts and the unorganized of every branch and section of the silk textile industry into one powerful, mass, rank-and-file controlled union, based upon the class struggle; and

WHEREAS: There are in existence many independent and craft unions besides the National Textile Workers Union and the United Textile Workers of America, none of which unions includes a majority, or a decisive minority of the silk and rayon workers of this country; and

WHEREAS: the present Conference now being held at the McAlpin Hotel, New York City, this 27th day of January, 1934, and called by the United Textile Workers, is limited only to a comparatively few delegates from small U.T.W. locals and therefore is not broad or representative enough to lay the basis for the unity of all silk workers; and

WHEREAS: The largest silk workers' local of the U.T.W., the Associated Silk Workers Union of Paterson, gave no opportunity to its thousands of members to meet and discuss any program or to elect their own representatives to this conference, and in all the U.T.W. silk locals the representation being extremely limited; and

WHEREAS: The official policies of the United Textile Workers of America, in relation to the question of Strikes, Arbitration, the N.R.A., the Textile Codes, Working Class Unity and Worker-Employer Relationship as stated in the Preamble and Objects of the U.T.W. Constitution and in its various articles, and as shown in the conduct and results of the recent national silk strike and other strikes con-

ducted by the U.T.W., are such as to tie the silk textile workers up to the employers and to prevent these workers from acting in their own interests; and

WHEREAS: The rising cost of living due to inflation and the proposed 40 per cent to 50 per cent reduction of the gold content of the dollar acts as a general and drastic wage-cut upon all workers, limiting their purchasing power and reducing the real wages of the workers, necessitates a perspective and preparation for mass strikes as the only effective method for raising our wages to meet the higher cost of living and increased prices of all commodities or even to maintain our present indecent standards as set by the slave \$12 and \$13 textile codes; and

WHEREAS: The "Workers Silk Textile Code" as presented to the N.R.A. authorities at the official hearings in Washington, D. C., on September 12, 1933, by the thirty delegates of the Independent Silk Workers Unions and the National Textile Workers Union constitutes a complete program for meeting the immediate needs of the silk textile workers, a copy of which is hereby attached as a part of this resolution; THEREFORE BE IT

RESOLVED: That this conference elect a committee to issue a Call for a Mass Conference to which there shall be invited delegations from all silk and dye workers' locals of both the United Textile Workers and the National Textile Workers Union and from all independent and craft unions and from the unorganized workers from every silk mill, throwing mill, artificial silk fibre producing plants, silk-rayon dye houses, etc., the purpose of this proposed mass conference to be stated in the call to be for the amalgamation of all existing silk and dye workers' unions, together with the unorganized silk and dye workers, into ONE INDUSTRIAL UNION as defined in paragraph one of this resolution; and BE IT FURTHER

RESOLVED: That the question of the affiliation of such proposed silk workers' union be left to the decision of the workers forming such union; and BE IT FURTHER

RESOLVED: That this conference reject the N.R.A.-bosses' silk textile code and adopt the Workers' Silk Code as our program for this industry.

The National Textile Workers Union is a fighting organization controlled by the workers. Its program is based upon the class struggle in recognition of the fact that only through determined, uncompromising struggle can the workers improve their conditions, organize the unorganized and build their union. The National Textile Workers Union bases itself exclusively upon the defense of the interests of the textile workers as a part of the working class, in contrast to the class collaboration policies of the reformist unions. It strives always to raise the level of

class consciousness of its members as a prerequisite for determined de-

fense of the interests of the working class.

The National Textile Workers Union is an industrial union. It organizes the textile workers on the basis of the mill as the unit of organization. Every worker in each textile mill is organized into a mill local. The mill local of the N.T.W.U. organizes the workers from the cellar to the roof regardless of craft.

In contrast to the undemocratic methods and bureaucracy of the reformist unions the N.T.W.U. places the entire control of the organization from top to bottom in the hands of its rank and file membership. In the mill locals the control is always in the hands of the workers. The mill local exercises local autonomy especially in regard to the right to declare local and shop strikes.

The building and strengthening of the National Textile Workers Union is the best guarantee for the unity of all textile workers in all

their struggles.

The first lesson of the silk strike for every textile worker is to organize all unorganized textile workers into the National Textile Workers Union and prepare for future struggles.

Every textile worker, employed or unemployed, is eligible to join the N.T.W.U. regardless of his or her political opinions, nationality or

color.

The National Textile Workers Union stands for the unity of the textile workers through the amalgamation of all existing textile unions, the organization of the unorganized and the solidarity of the employed and part-time workers with the unemployed textile workers.

The 200,000 silk textile and dye workers will not be alone in the formation of a real united rank and file controlled union based upon the class struggle and in their fight against the N.R.A. codes for better conditions and wages.

The shoe and leather workers have already amalgamated their unions into such a fighting industrial union outside the A. F. of L. The food workers, needle trades, miners, marine workers, metal and steel workers, automobile workers, agricultural workers and others are mov-

ing in this direction.

Soon we in the textile industry will join hands with our fellow workers organized in all other industries and set up a real fighting trade union center which shall federate all unions outside the A. F. of L. into one powerful body capable of uniting all our forces and giving militant working class direction to the whole economic struggle which must ultimately lead to the overthrow of the capitalist system of wage slavery with its crises and wars.

America could be a land of peace and plenty under a workers' and

farmers' government.

The way out of the capitalist crisis, with its misery, humiliation and war for American workers and farmers, is the way which the workers and farmers of Russia took under Lenin and Stalin. This means the revolutionary overthrow of the rule of the capitalist class. The chief supporters of this boss class are the fascist and social-fascist leaders of the A. F. of L., the Muste group, Lovestone group, and of the Socialist Party. They stand in the way of every action of the working class to free itself from wage slavery. They block every movement of the workers toward unity in thought and action.

They support the N.R.A. and the slave codes designed to keep us chained to the bosses under compulsory arbitration and other such fascist schemes. Every strike to break these chains and to improve our conditions under capitalism is a step in the direction of working class freedom. Every organization of the workers under their own control and leadership is a weapon in their hands in the fight for

freedom.

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